

Unearthing the Self: Performative and Theological Explorations Towards a Discovered Identity

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Abstract

How does one begin to understand the self? Approaching identity as a fragmented and complex form, this thesis argues that true self-knowledge is a thing to be discovered rather than created. As a route in, it offers three separate starting points: faith, the mind and the other.

In the first instance, the journey begins with the divine. Approaching theology in light of contemporary theatre practice, God is presented as the origin of creation. From there structural and poststructural linguistic theory is applied to areas of the Bible that tackle identity.

Shifting from the celestial realm, Chapter Two pays attention to the unconscious. Postulating that dreams may hold the key to our definitive self, practitioner-theorists Hélène Cixous, Susan Gannon and Richard Russo present the starting point for self-discovery as belonging in the mind.

The final chapter offers as its starting point, our place in the collective. Examining the internal/external binary, it postulates that a greater understanding of who we are is gained by understanding our role in contemporary society. After examining audience participation in relation to (self) sacrifice, the Church's contemporary view towards gender theory is presented, exploring the freedom (and incarceration) of choice.

The thesis closes by offering three starting points for the journey of self discovery: the divine, the mind and by examining our relationship with the other. It concludes that true identity should not merely be seen as a final destination, but rather something that is formed along the journey of discovery itself.

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Introduction

Let me to take you back in time. It is Friday 21st of June 2019. I have changed from casual clothes to a suit and back again but have finally settled on the smart/casual look. I have a thick collection of papers in my hand and head full of questions, not least of all 'what am I doing?'. It is a job interview. One like I have never experienced before. After months of deliberating, discerning, prayer and contemplation I have made it to the interview stage and today I shall find out whether or not I am a suitable candidate for the Catholic priesthood. This is the beginning of something big. For years I have questioned what life is about, what my purpose might be and ultimately who I am. Today is the day I finally start to get answers.

Back in the present day and it is safe to say that my somewhat rose-tinted view on life's big questions did not quite come to fruition. Sent back home from the Spanish training college I found myself back at my desk finalising the thinking of this very thesis. In an ironic compliment, the reminiscent tale above fits neatly with the central question of this document: How do I unearth my true self? The work that follows all presuppose that identity is something to be discovered rather than formed of our own choosing. It does so in light of my own personal grapple with priestly vocation but also in a bid to contribute to the wider conversation of individuality and self-understanding. As such, each of the three chapters presents its own aims and ambitions which (when combined) offer three possible starting points on the road to self-discovery: the divine, the mind and by examining our relationship with the other.

Faith, Worship and Performance

In a thesis that explores the place of performance text in the journey of self-discovery and faith, it is important to highlight the differences between faith and worship presupposed going forward. There are numerous theatre practitioners and critical thinkers that describe the relationship between ritual and performance. Elizabeth Arweck and William J. F. Keenan's 2006 book *Materializing Religion: Expression Performance and Ritual*, offers a broad scope of essays on religions and their use of ritualistic performance. In his 2013 book, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, Richard Schechner describes how in 'religion, rituals give form to the sacred, communicate doctrine, open pathways to the supernatural, and mold individuals into communities' (Schechner 2013:52). It is a description that is also applicable to theatre: the sense of the individual morphing into the collective. This thesis however, distances itself from performative worship and ritual, shifting its understanding of religiosity towards faith. There is a key distinguishing feature here between faith and worship. Whilst the latter does indeed associate itself with elements of performance, it is the former that arguably is the un-performative aspect. One can indeed perform one's faith, but what exactly that faith is, remains known only unto that person. Whether we have a faith or not is perhaps immaterial, the key point is that this building block of one's identity is deep within. For this reason, the thesis offers performance text that ties itself to the building blocks of my own identity. This autoethnographic approach therefore seeks to make connections between Theology and Performance theory.

Research Methods

As its key research method, this thesis follows the structure of Practice as Research (PAR) as described by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

According to theorist Robin Nelson, the methodology allows for practice to be the 'key method of inquiry', and that despite involving 'more labour and a broader range of skills', the results achieved are of 'equivalent rigour' to that of more traditional approaches to research (Nelson 2013:8-9). Tied to this methodology is my use of autoethnography. Employing my own journey of vocation and discernment, alongside the theories presented in this thesis allows for my own practice to continue the philosophical questions presented and offer a unique contribution to the field of performance text simultaneously. For critical thinker John Freeman, the 'creation of performance text is an act of metaphor' and as such has the 'potential to be recognisable and resonant beyond the sum of their constituent and linguistic parts' (Freeman 2007:93). Equally, the performance text I present in this thesis aims to do just that: seek to be symbolic in its visual presentation on the page, but go beyond its construction to a place more personal, philosophical and open to wide interpretation. Further to this key methodology is the use of case studies (as described shortly in this introduction) along with live and documented performance. Of equal importance also is my involvement in the Catholic Mass. True to autoethnographic work, it is the self I am placing in the performance text and so my experience of assisting the Mass as Altar Server for almost twenty years has meant that I have an understanding of its Liturgies and its components (both Theological and personal alike).

Case Studies

Over the course of this thesis I employ the use of case studies from the fields of Theology, Performance and Psychology. Relating to the divine, Chapter One takes the Bible as its base text, viewing its lexicon through both structuralist and poststructuralist lenses alike. Following this I present detailed case studies of practitioners Pastor Nelson Domingues and Jefferson Bethke, both of who can be seen to engage with biblical text in their practice. Finally, attention turns to artist Andy Goldsworthy OBE, who's sculptures take, as their base material, nature. Combining the three, I then offer my own practice which seeks to continue the philosophical discussion into origin and identity.

Chapter Two proposes that the journey to self-discovery begins internally in our own minds and the act of dreaming is offered as a route to the unconscious. Feminist thinkers Susan Gannon and Hélène Cixous are employed to explore theories of the other trapped within. Theatre practitioners highlighted in this chapter include Haylee McGee, Ramps on the Moon and Katie O'Reilly, all of whose work can be seen to engage with notions of another self. Finally, after offering the psychological viewpoints of Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud, close analysis of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting For Godot* (1953) is employed. Again, amalgamating the theory discussed, I continue the exploration by offering my own practice.

Finally Chapter Three invites us to examine our relationship with the other and the world around us. Chapter Three interrogates the relationship between the individual and the collective, presenting audience participation as an act of (self) sacrifice. Critical thinker Gareth White offers the possibility that self-understanding might be achieved through participation and the power of saying yes. Close reading is presented again with attention placed on Chloë Moss' identity searching play *How*

Love is Spelt (2004). Extracting themes relating to identity including, name, location and employment, the play offers an alternative view in the discussion of identity as a journey. Faith and theology is then returned to, this time offering the Church's contemporary stance on gender neutrality and the freedom in choosing who we want to be. Lifting directly from the Vatican's 2019 Papal Exhortation *Male and Female He Created Them: Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education*, the thesis then offers an examination of theological teaching against a backdrop of contemporary culture. Finally, the topics of gender, participation and our place in the collective are all further explored in my own performative writing.

A Final Note

Finally, it is important to highlight the significance of the triune model to this thesis. Sitting at the heart of Catholic doctrine is the belief that God is formed of three parts: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Collectively the three are all God and God is all three. With this triadic structure in mind the thesis incorporates its framework in two ways. Firstly, in its structure, the project comprises of three chapters each formed of three parts, alongside practice that engages typographically with notions of the number three. Secondly, as an academic approach to practice. Each chapter can be divided into three particular areas which, when combined, create the totality of that chapter: theology, performance theory and my own practice exploration. As a working (and research) model for this MPhil, the nature of the triune is of great implication and expressed throughout its pages. In addition, each chapter offers three boxes which I have termed as 'Dialogue with Practice', followed by final notes on stage direction before the practice. Largely self-explanatory, the boxes are route in to the continued philosophical thinking relating to my performance text. They serve also as means of

clarification concerning detail in the practice but ultimately showcase the relationship between the theory presented and my performative thinking.

It is with great trepidation that one embarks on the journey to find one's self. Like the fragmented nature of identity, such an endeavour is to produce joy, fear and the unexpected. At the heart of this thesis lays the timelessly asked question: 'Who am I?'. Through its practice-based undertaking, this MPhil allows for a deeper connection between the critical thinking and my personal response to it that other degrees may not. To that end it is not untrue to say that with this dissertation comes aspects of my own troubles in grappling with the aforementioned question. What follows is not an end point to the journey, but rather the possibility of its beginning.

Chapter One

‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’

(John 1:1)

The Bible undoubtedly sits at the heart of Christian text. Charting the relationship between God and mankind, the Catholic Mass is interwoven with extracts and prayers that take their form directly from its passages. For millennia, scholars and critics have deciphered and interpreted its themes and discourse. This chapter seeks to explore performative responses that are evoked from holding theoretical lenses towards the Bible. As the overarching structure of this MPhil, theatre and performance will be employed to further understand how self-identity can be the result of discovery, rather than our own creating. Using my own exploration of vocation to the Catholic Priesthood, I shall form a portfolio of my performance practice in light of the research undertaken. Taking the New International Version (NIV)¹ as the source for Biblical text, this first chapter will pay particular attention to textual structure of the Bible and the resulting practice that can be produced.

Beginning with the Book of Psalms, the chapter will address the writing as a series of poems. Exploring themes of intimacy and divine connection, the psalms will be used to highlight where our identity might sit in relation to our human quest for reasoning. Employing theoretical approaches offered by French philosopher Jacques Derrida allows for a recontextualization of some of the key building blocks of the poetry, particularly when observed against other areas of the Bible. Progressing to section two, attention will shift towards the relationship between the New and Old

¹ Widely available in print and free to access online

Testaments. Theoretical underpinnings of Ferdinand de Saussure and Mikhail Bakhtin, provide a foundation on which to produce practice stemming from the biblical text. Combined with intertextual approaches highlighted by Julia Kristeva, the section explores the call/response relationship of the two Testaments, and questions what (or whom) might sit in the divide between the two. Finally in section three, attention will turn to practitioners who can be seen to work with the identified theoretical approaches. Firstly, artist Andy Goldsworthy OBE who takes nature as the medium with which he works. In doing so Goldsworthy works with material outside of his choosing and reshapes what he finds into a new identity. Secondly, writer and Pastor Nelson Domingues, who performance poetry amalgamates scriptural passages with his own interpretation, producing practice rooted in faith. Finally, spoken word performer Jefferson Bethke, who's controversial practice has been met with some criticism from the Church. Together, the three artists in their own right, create practice related to identity within, but source the material from without. My own resulting practice will work in the same way, taking influence from the theoretical underpinnings, along with the approaches of the artists mentioned above, in order to create a fragmented series of my own performative psalms.

i. Psalms

The quote at the start of this chapter, taken from the very beginning of St John's Gospel, neatly lays its foundation. The capitalisation used in every 'Word' provides a sense of its layered meaning. Firstly (as with most books) the Bible is constructed with words and it is these words that will be examined through a critical lens in this chapter, in light of contemporary theatre practice. Secondly, just as words are a vehicle for communication, the Bible is a means by which God communicates with

His creation. Finally, and perhaps crucially, the capitalised 'Word' is the title given to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is Christ who is embodied in the text of the Bible. He is the vehicle through which God speaks, He is the subject of which God speaks and He is the fulfilment and realisation of what God speaks. In the following chapters and practice we shall see just how significant the number three is to the Catholic faith, but this threefold definition of the term 'Word' is a helpful example that the language of the Bible can be consistently reinterpreted and textually understood. In the context of this chapter, I shall use critical approaches to text to support my argument of self-discovery over self-creation beginning with the Book of Psalms. I will then create my own practice in response to the theoretical findings which also seek to add to the conversation between faith and performance.

Consisting of 150 separate passages, the Book of Psalms can be interpreted as a series of poems. On close examination the works can be seen to support theories of intertextuality and linguistic structure. One psalm that sits comfortably in the discussion of self is number 139 (Appendix 1), in which the psalmist expresses how deeply they are known by God. For the purpose of this examination, I shall adopt the methodology of the Benedictine Monks: *Lectio Divina* (Divine Reading). So called as they follow a prayerful way of living formulated by St Benedict, the Benedictine Monks devote their time to hospitality, Gregorian chant and long periods of silence for biblical contemplation. Their approach to reading the text of the Bible involves placing oneself in the action with the intended result being a much more individual response to what they are reading and therefore a more intimate relationship with God. Akin to the theory of French thinker Roland Barthes, the process invites us to take ownership of what we are reading, to create our own response to the piece: more a sense of what it says to *me*, rather than to *us*. This is

crucial since, as Catholics believe, the Bible is a communication between God and mankind, it is important to be able to receive it as if we were the only ones who will ever read it: a one to one with God via text. The Psalms are a particularly appropriate for this as more often than not they are written in the first person. Thus, for this Psalm, it is appropriate to assume the role of the speaker; to adopt the viewpoint that it is the very self that is in conversation with God. In doing so we might achieve the aforementioned individualism and furthermore understand our self as intimately known, lovingly made and something to be discovered.

The opening verse states, 'You have searched me Lord, and you know me' (Psalms 139:1). Immediately there is a sense of God being aware of who we are. When all else fails, when we search for identity but cannot quite place ourselves, there is someone who has already searched and knows precisely who we are. Verse two goes even deeper when it explains that 'you perceive my thoughts from afar' (Psalms 139:2). Perhaps at first glance, God is presented as an Orwellian Big Brother, nothing going unnoticed. Approached differently however, there is a sense of connectivity: not of observation, but of unity. Thinking is a deeply intimate activity. It is perhaps the only thing we can do safe in the knowledge that nobody else knows. Yet, here we are faced with the prospect that God is indeed privy to our thoughts. More often than not in Catholicism, thoughts that are open to God can be deemed as (silent) prayer. Arguably, one can mentally remove themselves from the act of praying and continue with the privacy of the mind. This verse however presents the idea that God and the mind are in perpetual contact. Thoughts are presented as a cord by which we are tied to the divine. Juxtaposed with the sense of intimacy also, is that God perceives such thoughts 'from afar' (ibid). Here we have something so deeply internal being observed from the distant external. Alternatively put, God dwells both

within and without. Therefore in the plight to discover who we are, we can begin by examining inside and out.

Moving forward to verse six and after ascertaining that God possess an intimate knowledge of our self, we are informed that 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me attain' (Psalm 139:6). It is an expression that God holds a knowledge that is both too beautiful to conceive and too great to comprehend. Initially, this may seem problematic to my endeavour. After all, if there is no way of grasping God's knowledge of who we are, then what would be the point in us trying? In our human quest for reason, it seems logical to want to understand in order for us to make sense, often relying on proof and scientific truth before we are prepared to believe something. Perhaps one response to this point might be simply that God does not operate in that manner. Just as one would not use weighing scales to measure the length of an object, how then can we use our sense of reason to understand that which created and supersedes reason itself? To say that the knowledge God possesses is beyond our reasoning does not mean to say that we cannot share in a part of it however. The Catholic Church describes such scenarios as Sacred Mysteries: those aspects of God that we might not fully comprehend but are invited to share in. One might argue that this is the very basis of faith: belief in that which cannot be proved. If we argue that one is invited to share in His knowledge but not fully understand it (and if we are to recognise that within this knowledge is a divine knowing of who we are) then we again can argue that self-discovery can be discerned by turning to the knowledge of God. Whilst we might not fully comprehend all of it, perhaps we can share in His knowledge of our own beauty, rather than trying to create it for ourselves. Furthermore, I would argue that to be

created by something which supersedes human understanding is far more empowering, than any jurisdiction given by the limits of our own imagination.

Verses 13 and 14 of the psalm further support the arguments above, but also provide opportunity to examine the text through a more critical lens: 'For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made' (Psalm 139:13-14). Here we are given an origin to our existence. Just as a mechanic might revert back to the manufacturer's manual to understand the machine, so too can we turn to our manufacturer in order to understand our self. There is a sense of care and protection within the poetry. To knit is an act that takes great patience, skill and time. It is an activity that requires care and gentility. The womb evokes protection and security, nourishment and survival. What does this mean in relation to an individual reading of the psalm? One answer might be that this creation which we have come to term as the self, has been patiently, lovingly made and surrounded by safety. At a recent retreat to Ampleforth Abbey, Benedictine Monk Fr Kevin Hayden gave a presentation on the origins of our identity. He argued that we were made 'by love, with love and to love' (Hayden, 2019). Applied in this context Fr Hayden echoes the earlier discussion that God (love) is both within and without. He is the sculptor and the clay. We are the product formed with His handiwork and thus marked with His fingerprint.

It is perhaps verse 14 that provides some consternation: 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made' (Psalm 139:14). The two terms seem to juxtapose. On the one hand identity is linked to fear and on the other, wonder. It is true to say of course that, as human beings, we are indeed a spectrum of feeling and emotions, but why might God create a self that is fearful of its creator? The critical viewpoint of Jacques Derrida can help us to ascertain.

Postructuralist Derrida invites us to approach text with an openness to multiple interpretation. Writing in *Limited Inc*, the French thinker explains that for him, text refers to ‘the structures called “real”, “economic”, “historical”, socio-institutional, in short: all possible referents’ (Derrida 2000:148). Put in this way, text is seen as wealth of possibilities directing us (as Derrida suggests) towards ‘all possible’ endpoints (ibid). With this in mind, he offers an approach by which we can delve into the subtext of a work, not just receiving it at first glance, which he terms as ‘deconstruction’ (Glendinning 2011:1). To deconstruct is to pull apart, it is the separating of components or building blocks, and by doing so we can begin to see how the totality of a structure (in this case, text) is in fact a combination of working parts and contexts. Derrida himself describes the approach as ‘the effort to take [...] limitless context into account, to pay the sharpest and broadest possible attention to context, and thus to an incessant movement of recontextualization’ (Derrida 2000:136). Therefore, if we attempt to deconstruct verse 14 of the psalm, we can then begin to pinpoint contexts that may give more meaning. Taking one of the identified building blocks – fear - we can deconstruct its possible interpretations (and referents) in order to create a deeper understanding of the text. To do this, I suggest highlighting other areas in the Bible where this term appears in order to recontextualise it here. We do not have to go far in order to begin. Psalm 103 tells of the praising God and of His compassion on His children. In keeping with the aforementioned power of three, we are thrice told of what those who fear the Lord can expect. Firstly in verse 11: ‘so great is his love for those who fear him’ (Psalm 103:11). Then again in verse 13: ‘the Lord has compassion on those who fear him’ (Psalm 103:13). Then finally in verse 17: ‘the Lord’s love is with them who fear him’ (Psalm 103:17). In this context, fear is presented as something that invokes the love

of God. It is juxtaposed by His tenderness and sympathy. How might this new information affect the interpretation of fear in psalm 139? Before answering it may be appropriate to look outside the Psalms at another place where fear is presented.

The Book of Proverbs can again be understood as a construction of fragmented poetry and (its name suggests) it is comprised of sayings and adages. Proverbs 1, verse 7 tells us that the ‘fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge’, and Proverbs 9, verse 10 that the ‘fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom [...] of the Holy One’. Here, fear is presented almost as rewarded by insight and of knowing God. If we are to combine this referent of fear with those of Psalm 103, and apply them to our original reading of fear, then being ‘fearfully [...] made’ now has revived interpretation (Psalm 139:14). The original question of why God would make a self that innately feared Him, could be answered thusly: fear of Him, is met by His love, compassion and insight. Therefore a recontextualization of our original verse might indicate that the self might be programmed to fear in order for its binaries, love and security, to become known to us. There is also, in this response to the deconstruction, a further observation offered by Derrida.

Titled by a misspelling of the word, Derrida’s seminal essay *Différance*, goes some way into examining the space between binaries. As both difference and *différance* are pronounced the same in French, their only obvious distinction comes on the page. In this way, Derrida highlights that we can be certain of knowing one thing, by knowing that which it is not. As Glendinning explains, ‘what Derrida calls ‘*différance*’ can be understood as the movement through which every sign is constituted historically as a weave of differences’ (Glendinning 2011:63). Thus I know what “hot” is as I also have an awareness of what “cold” is. What Derrida invites us to examine however is the divide: that space between the two in which

meaning is made. Thus fear, with all its negative connotations (terror, dread, the unknown) is subdued by its opposite (comfort, compassion and security). What of the divide however? I postulate that perhaps it is our self which must exist in the divide: we are the meaning makers. By seeing ourselves as meaning makers, we might take a step closer towards understanding our identity. Furthermore, one might even go as far as to say that within the divide between Biblical text and our interpretation, one may find God. Between His word and our reading, the self can enjoy a very private, intimate and fearful relationship with its creator.

Dialogue with Practice

How then does the theory inform and reveal itself in my own practice? Exploring the layered concept of the biblical Word, text has been presented as vehicle (and subject) of God's communication. Similarly in my own work, the communicating text is reimagined on a visual level, experimenting with its appearance on the page. The structural layout of *The Beginning* and *Cross* for example follow a very strict design, whereas the unpunctuated and free flowing nature of *I am The Crest of a Wave*, seeks to question the absence of ink on the page, quite literally leaving gaps amongst the text. Pieces of practice containing the headphone symbol in the upper righthand corner (🎧) are designed to be recorded by the reader and then played back to his/herself using headphones. By specifically listing to one's own voice the intention of the work is to allow for a version of the *Lectio Divina*. Just as the Bible is presented as a one to one with God, then by placing oneself in the text of the practice (and furthermore surround oneself with their own voice), the desired outcome is an intimate one to one with the self. Interrogating Derridean approaches to deconstruction and *déférance*, the ink on the page of *Tabula Razor* sees a return to typographical exploration. By literally deconstructing the words into their building block letters, the text can be reshaped and reformed into a new visual interpretation. Just as Derrida's *déférance* separates itself from difference via visual means on the page, so too do the reworked words take on an alternative meaning when seen, rather than just heard. Perhaps a bold choice, the visual layout of the text is aimed to deliver obscurity but with glimpses of recognisability. Such as with the fragmented and deconstructed self, there are small aspects which to glance over may seem familiar, but yet with the wider piece as a whole, it seems quite foreign. It is only on closely reading the text that one is able to see how each line should be read vertically. The design is not dissimilar to that of computer programming and so there are links here to power of creation, particularly with regards to aspects of ones character one cannot design/control. This is particularly resonant in the following line: 'I am the scrawling of the writer's quill A being scripted from the depths of the depths.' There is exploration here of where exactly we come from and as a result, who it is that has 'scripted' our very being.

ii. Testaments

In his *Course in General Linguistics*, Ferdinand de Saussure argues that language is a constructed system that relies on the collective understanding of its signals. Sounds, letters and words he terms as the 'signifier' and the concept they produced as the 'signified' (Saussure 1966:67). Interestingly, whilst removing centralised truth from language and placing it within a system, the theory does amalgamate the individual with the collective: the former in exploring a wider range of 'signifiers' and the latter interpreting them in a broader context² (ibid). Saussure also has an awareness that the system is a developing one. Commentator Graham Allen explains how Saussure terms language existing at any given time as 'synchronic', whilst labelling the process of its development as 'diachronic' (Allen 2011:9). This can be observed in older publications of the Bible for example, where pronouns such as "thee", "thou" and "thine" appear in more contemporary editions as "you" or "yours". Binaries such as those observed by Saussure can also be identified in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. For the Russian theorist however, Saussure overlooks the sociocultural context of language. As linguistics and their meaning constantly develop across communities, there can be no 'moment in time where a synchronic system of language could be constructed' (Bakhtin and Volosinov 1986:66). Instead, Bakhtin's binary explains that a 'word is a two sided act', adding that it is the 'product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener' (Bakhtin and Volosinov 1986:86). Simply put, discourse is a collaboration between two parties, the product of which is meaning, which again can be observed in the Derridean framework discussed above. This understanding is particularly apt in relation to the Lectio

² A good example of this might be a crossword where the 'signifier' is the clue and the 'signified' being the answer.

Divina methodology observed earlier, as both place significance on the individual: Bakhtin insofar as the individual is part of the meaning making, and the Benedictine approach as it embeds the person within the language. In this respect we can begin to see the roots of Julia Kristeva's intertextuality appearing and crucially Bakhtin's dialogic. Michael Holquist's work *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* highlights that the dialogic explains how 'nothing can be perceived except against the backdrop of something else' (Holquist 2002:22). Essentially, words (and texts) are not isolated but are in fact in dialogue with each other and linguistic choice is affected by that which both precedes and succeeds it³. I shall highlight the significance of this theory within a Biblical context shortly, but first it is useful to introduce the significance of Kristeva's understanding of intertextuality. Akin to Bakhtin, Kristeva also has an awareness of sociocultural context. In her essay *Word, Dialogue, Novel* she observes literature 'as an intersection of textual surfaces [...] a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee [...] and the contemporary or earlier cultural context' (Kristeva 1980:65). Despite being targeted towards literature, the argument is appropriate in this context too (which itself ironically supports the theory). Collectively the Bible serves as that 'intersection of textual surfaces' (ibid). In the portfolio that follows, intertextuality greatly informs not only the dialogue itself, but also its very appearance on the page. Reimagining textual and linguistic theory - and amalgamating it with performance theory and practice – can result in a diverse catalogue of my own work. Presently, a good example of intertextual conversation in the Bible can be found in the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.

Chosen by God to receive His message for the people, the prophets (as their name suggests) would prophesise about the future relationship between mankind

³ → text ←

and the Divine. One such prophet writing around 700 years before Christ was Isaiah. Foretelling of Christ and signs that would reveal Him as the Messiah are littered throughout the prophet's writing and offer a useful working model incorporating all of the highlighted linguistic theory. Isaiah 7:14 tells us that the 'Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel⁴'. Jumping forward to Luke's Gospel in the New Testament, the Saint writes of Mary's encounter with the Angel Gabriel. On being told she would conceive, Mary responds by asking 'How will the be [...] since I am virgin' (Luke 1:34). The angel then informs her: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). Saussure's symbolic system can be observed here (quite literally) as Isaiah offers two signs by which the Messiah will be recognised. The virgin birth and title are the signifiers and Luke's report of the event the signified. Kristeva's intertextual viewpoint is highlighted by the two separate texts (further distanced by several centuries), almost in a call/response dialogue with one another and, as the theorist suggests, are an amalgamation of 'writer', 'addressee' and 'cultural context', all serving to create meaning and reveal Christ as the Messiah (Kristeva 1980:65). It is perhaps the binary notions of Bakhtin and Derrida that prove most revealing in the texts. If we take the former's understanding of the dialogic and, observe Luke's text 'against the backdrop' of Isaiah, we can begin to see how the two separate contexts collaborate to make meaning (Holquist 2002:22). Equally the Derridean viewpoint invites us to observe and decipher the meaning found in the difference between the two texts (rather than just their similarities). If we understand there to exist meaning making in the intertextual dialogue and dialogic nature of the extracts, then what

⁴ Which means God With Us

precisely is the meaning? I would argue in this case that the theories support the idea of God being revealed through the text and it is His revelation that is at the heart of the meaning making. Furthermore if, as Catholics believe, Jesus is the embodiment of God's love for His people, we can go as far as to say that Christ is indeed the difference. He is the one who dwells between the intertextual dialogue and gives meaning to the divide between them. How then might this support the overarching argument of self-discovery over self-creation? Interestingly, both extracts relate to the theme of identity. Firstly Isaiah foretelling ways in which the identity of the Messiah will be realised and secondly how His identity will be created in Luke's Gospel. It is the latter that proves most useful. The virgin birth sits deep within Catholic doctrine, supporting Jesus as fully human and fully divine. Again, we see repetition of the threefold layering of God: The Son, created by the Father and through the intervention of the Holy Spirit. Referring back to Psalm 139 there is yet more (intertextual) dialogue as God again 'knit[s]' together in the 'mother's womb' (Psalm 139:13). Once more, God is presented as the origin of identity. If (as doctrine argues) Christ is fully divine, then we can add a further "mystery" to the notion of identity: paradoxically that God has the power to create Himself. As the Book of Revelation tells us, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega' says the Lord, both the beginning and the end (Revelation 22:13). Put another way, He is the origin of life itself and even death has no power over Him, for He is the totality.

If then, the origin of identity points towards God and Christ dwells as the meaning making intertext of the Bible, Benedictine approaches *Lectio Divina* can offer a route to placing our self within that intertext. In other words, if we take the time to place our self within the writing (as the methodology suggests), we not only

benefit from deeper understanding of it but moreover we can encounter Christ who, as the author of identity, can reveal to us the person we were created to be.

Dialogue with Practice

Taking great influence from the call/response nature of the Testaments, along with the 'reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener', the practice of this chapter explores these concepts with a view towards faith (Bakhtin and Volosinov 1986:86). In *The Divide* for example, the text above the line appears recognisable and the inquisitive voice seeks to understand intangible binaries (light/dark, time/stillness, air/space). The response below the line at first may seem familiar, though on close inspection is written upside down. By the performer/reader physically turning the page, sense is made of it, however the result is that the original text is now the one upside down. In this manner, words that appear below the line are always the wrong way around. This is significant as it is a textual representation of the binary above/below, synonymous with heaven and earth. This dualistic theme is continued in *Psalms* 2, where the bold typeface (influenced by the call/response psalm reading during Mass) is returned to after each verse. Stage directions are sparsely used throughout all of the practice submitted in this thesis as directorial decision is intended to be influenced by structural arrangement. In the example of *Psalms* 2 therefore, the widespread layout of each four-line verse is then recentralised by the refrain, symbolic of the running away from a centralised truth (identity), only to be brought back once more.

Highlighted by Julia Kristeva, the collaborative nature of textuality is explored in *Slabs*. Adhering to a strict boxed format, the piece engages with foreign text (Greek alphabet), broken conversation, questioning, typography and deconstructed sentences. Though uniformed in their presentation, the boxes are snippets of dialogue. They are separate though they have been woven together in order to create a whole. Just as the self might be understood as a fragmented construct, so too does *Slabs* present itself visually (outwardly) as precise, though stitched together (inwardly) of broken pieces and contradictions.

iii. Practicing Faith

So far text within the Bible has been presented as God speaking through prophets, psalmists and other writers throughout. Chosen to receive the Word of God such writers are perhaps vehicles for His mission, piecing together what has

been revealed to them. In some respects they are the sculptor working with material outside of their choosing, namely the words revealed to them. One artist that can be seen to work in a similar fashion is British sculptor Andy Goldsworthy OBE. Like the writers of the Bible before him, Goldsworthy works with material that is given to him from without – chiefly, nature. Employing what he finds in the natural world around him, Goldsworthy becomes the vehicle through which the art works, just as the Biblical writers act as vehicles for God. Writing on Artnet.com, Goldsworthy explains that his work is ‘not about art’, but rather ‘about life’, and specifically ‘that a lot of things in life do not last’ (Artnet, 2019). There is a poetic approach to his understanding of his work. The ephemerality of life is indeed akin to live performance itself, existing for just as long as it lasts, occupying that moment in time. This view is also evident in the 2001 documentary *Rivers and Tides* which follows Goldsworthy as he travels the globe creating art from a vast range of terrains and climates. In one section, Goldsworthy can be seen sculpting with ice. Using his bare hands to separate the ice and his teeth to shape it, he explains that with gloves comes a lack of ‘sensitivity’ and that he ‘lose[s] feel’ of the work (Riedelsheimer, 2001). There is a tangible connection therefore between Goldsworthy and his work, just as earlier argued, there exists a spiritual tangibility between God and His creation that sustains our link with Him. The sense of ephemerality is furthered also when, as the sun rises, it illuminates the finished ice sculpture. On seeing this, Goldsworthy comments that ‘the very thing that brings the work to life, is the thing that will cause its death’ once the heat starts to melt the ice (ibid). Sustainability is also highlighted with Goldsworthy explaining that for him, ‘art is a form of nourishment’ (ibid). There is here a sense that his work is consistently feeding him and in order to remain alive he must keep himself fed. Again there exist links to Catholicism where at Mass,

Catholics are spiritually nourished by the word of God and ultimately by the Eucharist – Christ truly present in the consecrated bread and wine. Two ‘big influences’ Goldsworthy identifies in his work are ‘the sea and the river, both water’ (ibid). Water, in a religious sense, has connotations of purifying and of washing away, but water in a Biblical sense develops this further. In the hot and arid landscape of the Biblical lands, water is a precious commodity and a symbol of life throughout both Testaments. Focussing attention on the New Testament, St John’s Gospel depicts an encounter between Jesus and a woman who comes to collect water from a well. On asking her for a drink, Jesus says that ‘whoever drinks the water I give will never be thirsty again [...] the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life’ (John 4:14). Water in this example shifts from sustenance in the short term, to eternal sustainability and it is interesting therefore that Goldsworthy identifies water as being influential in his work and the basis for their sustenance.

Another form of practice that can be seen to amalgamate text, identity and spirituality is the performance poetry of Nelson Domingues. Describing himself as ‘a husband, father, pastor [and] writer artist’, Domingues is not a minister in the Catholic faith though his work exploring identity is particularly relevant to this thesis (Bible Munch, 2019). Combining passages from Scripture with his own personal response, Domingues’ poetry can arguably be seen as a performance based realisation of the Lectio Divina methodology. In the extracts that follow, the work also engages with textual theories highlighted earlier in this chapter. *My Identity in Christ* is Domingues’ 2017 spoken word piece exploring the relationship between Christ, identity and Biblical text. Towards the opening of the piece, Domingues observes that ‘each and every day you face an onslaught of past definitions [...] and future condemnation’ (Domingues, 2019). What is interesting here is that Domingues

speaks in the second person format. The result is an intimate one to one approach, which also sets the underlying format of a one to one approach with Christ. The notion that the 'onslaught' consists on 'past definitions' also highlights the power of the other when it comes to our identity (ibid). This assault of definitions comes from a place without (the past) and is, in a sense, beyond our control. What is also interesting is that the giving of a definition here acts as a simile for the Bakhtinian dialogic identified earlier: the present affected by that which precedes and succeeds it. In this example however, it is not text that sits at the centre of opposing forces, but rather identity⁵. Kristeva's understanding of intertextuality is also evidenced when Domingues tells us that 'you were dead in sin but alive in Christ' (ibid). This line arguably has its roots in St Paul's Letters to the Romans where he writes: 'count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus' (Romans 6:11). Both Domingues and St Paul evoke a sense of rebirth and with rebirth comes fresh identity, a clean start, dead to what we were before ('past definitions') and living now in Christ (who is yet to Come again). If, therefore, it is in Christ that we are living, it seems logical to argue that our identity is in some way tied to Him.

A second useful (and somewhat controversial) example of spoken word performance is *Why I Hate Religion, but Love Jesus* by Jefferson Bethke. Available on the vlogger's YouTube channel the short film has been viewed over 34 million times (July 2019). Sparking controversy for its views, the performance received less than positive reviews from Biblical Scholars including fellow YouTuber Bishop Robert Barron. Whilst I personally do not side with his overall attempt to move away from organised worship, there are several points throughout the piece that showcase practice as realisation of the theory explored. Ranging from strict rhyming scheme in

⁵ → identity ←

parts, to more freestyle oratory in others, the structure of the piece is a neat representation of the diversity, chaos and order found in creation and indeed in our own selves. In the opening lines, Bethke introduces how religion might be a façade, hiding something less than perfect underneath: ‘Now I ain’t judging, I’m just saying we’re putting on a fake look, ‘cos there’s a problem if people only know you’re a Christian by your Facebook’ (Bethke, 2019). It is ironic that this diminishing trust in social media should be exercised on a global video sharing website though the reality is that social media does provide a platform for one to create a virtual identity. A self that we wish to portray to others, whilst perhaps the truth remains somewhat different. In this way one is able to create a public persona and a private one also, the result of which (I would argue) is further confusion of the true self. This sense of dual identity is highlighted again further on in the piece: ‘This was me too, but no one seemed to be on to me, acting like a Church kid but addicted to pornography’ (ibid). It is not until further into the piece that Bethke introduces a relationship with Christ and one that requires no hiding nor concealing of one’s faults: ‘I spent my whole life building this façade of neatness, but now that I know Jesus, I boast in my weakness’ (ibid). What is portrayed here is a sense of acceptance, despite the faults⁶. Rather than the perfectionism Bethke aimed to portray, his faults are celebrated aspects of human frailness accepted by Christ. This is further developed as he introduces God, explaining that ‘when [he] was God’s enemy, certainly not a fan, [God] looked down and said ‘I want that man’’ (ibid). It is an example of the person relationship, the one to one with Him, that can help to shape our sense of identity. Just as *Lectio Divina* invites us to step into the action, allowing our self to be in the text, here Bethke

⁶ There is also a nod towards the intertextual here as Bethke can be seen to reshape St Pauls’s teaching to the Corinthians: ‘I will boast all the more gladly about my weakness, so that Christ’s power may rest on me’ (2 Corinthians 12:9).

describes God wanting us to step towards Him. It is a neat practice-based example of the psalmist foundations described earlier: the sense of intimacy, of being chosen and being known by God. For Bethke (as his performance suggests) this intimacy came from not hiding the aspects of himself he did not like, but bringing them with him to his new found relationship with God. Moreover, as this thesis argues, this resulted in a deeper awareness of who he was, warts and all. This idea of stepping into (both text and a relationship with God), does not come without its fears. To step into anything takes courage, particularly when we are unaware of the outcome.

In his foreword to Elisabeth Schafer's *Theatre and Christianity*, former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams contributes to the relationship between theatre, faith and identity writing that the 'central Christian story continues to generate dramatic exploration', citing that its 'ironies and inner tensions' serve as a useful resource for tackling the 'difficulties of our own human perceptions of self' (Schafer 2019:X). What is interesting here is that Williams identifies performance as a means of exploring both faith and identity. Akin to Saussure's meaning making system, Williams understands the Christian narrative to 'deal in coding and decoding', operating through signalling that requires contemplation and reflection (idib). There exist throughout the Gospels, examples of the performer/spectator relationship identifiable in contemporary theatre. In chapter thirteen of Matthew's Gospel, we are told that 'such large crowds gathered around Him [Jesus] that He got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore' (Matthew 13:2). Immediately we are presented with a recognisable structure of the performer/recipient relationship. Alluding to Byron Taylor's 2015 book *More TV, Vicar?*, Schafer highlights how the techniques employed by Jesus would 'give modern stand-ups a run for their money' commenting that He was 'funny and often

ironic' (Schafer 2019:55). Taylor writes that 'much of Jesus' teaching used the techniques of comedians such as hyperbole and juxtaposition to expose the misuse of power in His own society' (Taylor 2015:92). Arguably such features can be identified in contemporary satire towards those in political governance. Shock was also a useful tool in Christ's teaching with one clear example being the parable of The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). On running out of his inheritance, the squandering son was left to work feeding pigs and 'longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating' (Luke 15:16). In Judaism, pork is not permitted. In the strict orthodox ruling of Jesus' time, to come into contact with such animals was to be defiled and unclean. The thought of the Jewish son longing to eat with them would have meant counting himself as being amongst the pigs, sharing in their feeding. The hyperbole identified by Taylor above is then counterbalanced with the image of the Father running towards his returning son. As identified earlier in this chapter with fear, here is something negative being wiped clean by the positive (mercy), with the Father's joy coming as his son was 'dead and is alive again: he was lost and is found' (Luke 15:32). A second example comes in Matthew 23, where Jesus is teaching His disciples and the crowds. The Pharisees were a group of Jewish elite, knowledgeable in religious law and held in high esteem (the Bible seems to purport) usually by themselves. Jesus tells the people that since the Pharisees 'are experts in the Law of Moses', then they should 'obey everything they teach you' (Matthew 23:1-3). This compliment towards the elite is quickly snatched away as Jesus follows by warning 'but don't do what they do', for 'they say one thing and do something else' (Matthew 23:3). Both of the two examples would perhaps have been uneasy listening for Jesus' contemporary audience, and yet He persisted in shocking the crowds in order for them to get the message.

Dialogue with Practice

Remaining with the notion of shock, my own practice which continues the philosophical explorations of this chapter are intended to be troublesome and mischievous. Lack of punctuation, upside-down text, rhyming/unrhyming extracts and investigative typography not only challenge the reader/performer visually, but such layout is also intended to provoke experimental directorial decision making. For example, the unpunctuated text of *I am the Crest of a Wave* invites performance makers to fill in the punctuation as they see fit. Thus the sentence 'How can I hope to understand when it is my own self I try to hide' might be understood as a whole question, but could also be read as a shorter question followed by a statement: 'How can I hope to understand when it is my own self? I try to hide.' Akin to the work of Goldsworthy, the original given material has now been reworked to produce a different outcome. The intention is that provided with the same base ingredient (text), theatre makers would produce a variety of work. In this way performances are joined to one another through the wording and yet are very individual entities depending on the deciphering of such text. Continuing with the influence of Goldsworthy, *I am the Crest of a Wave*, *Slabs* and *Tabula Razor* are all intended to mimic patterns of natural formation. Describing the use of gloves as way in which to 'lose feel' of his work, the sculptor also influences the notion of connectivity between self and practice (Riedelsheimer, 2001). The marked audio scripts, along with the requirement that they be recorded solely by the listener, serve as means of contact between the recipient and the work. A simile for the theme of the triune, the three layered outcome consists of writer (my own self) as origin and the listener serving as both recipient and performer. This idea also identifies with Dr William's understanding of the Christian narrative working in 'coding and decoding' (Schafer 2019:X). It could be argued that as writer I translate ideas (and indeed my self) into the coded wording on the page. The job of the recipient is then to decode the material by recording it and listening to it themselves.

The stylistic approach of Nelson Domingues is also evident in my practice. Like the writer/performer I take influence from psalm structure, but unlike him however, I do not lift directly from the scripture. In an amalgamation of his own text with that of the Bible, Domingues creates an understanding of the self which is textually tied to God. In my own practice however, I engage with aspects of structure in order to create my own understanding. For example, *Psalm 1* is written in the first person with direct address to God, *Psalm 2* then adds a layer of repetition and *The Divide* finally sees God in conversation with the first person, though from afar.

Collectively, the practice of this chapter is intended to be fragmented. There are similarities that tie work to each other, but they are offered as a totality formed of very individual compartments. Whilst all of them seek to ascertain a link between the self and the divine, the taking on of ownership (through recorded voice or directorial interpretation for example) allow for a very individual relationship with the text and one which reflects the fragmented nature of identity itself.

A note on Stage Directions

The pieces of performance practice which follow are intended to be difficult to work with. Experimental in their appearance, they seek to continue to philosophical discussion began in the chapter, but ultimately require experimental interpretation from both performer and director alike. The pieces aim to break rules and so in their deciphering should spark debate. For this reason the use of any stage directions in the pieces has been omitted. They are there to be scrutinised. The only strict aspect that must be observed are the pieces with (🎧) in the top right corner. As specified earlier in this chapter, these pieces are designed to be recorded by the performer and listened back to only by that same person. Not only does this investigate the binary natures of self/other and performer/audience, it also ensures that the listener is caught in an intimate confronting of their own voice. As such I have ensured these pieces are shorter in length and realistically could be performed by one person. With regards to the other pieces, the number of performers, great or small, is flexible. As many involve snippets of conversation there is not fixed location requirement. It is hoped that the realised performances be as busy as they appear on the page. As this chapter has explored questions of origin, the aim for the pieces is that the origin is no longer myself as playwright, but that a new origin emerge from the performer(s) and director. To that end, the freedom found in the lack of stage direction is intended to be an open invitation to take ownership of the script and, as a result, transform it into something unrecognisable from the performance text provided.

Practice



One.
 One. Two.
 Two. Four.
 Four. Eight.
 Eight. Sixteen.
 Sixteen. Thirty Two.
 Thirty Two. Sixty Four.
 Sixty Four. One Hundred and Twenty Eight.
 One Hundred and Twenty Eight. Two Hundred and Fifty Six.
 Two Hundred and Fifty Six. Five Hundred and Twelve.
 Five Hundred and Twelve. One Thousand and Twenty Four.
 One Thousand and Twenty Four. Two Thousand and Forty Eight.
 Two Thousand and Forty Eight. Four Thousand and Ninety Six.
 Four Thousand and Ninety Six. Eight Thousand One Hundred and Ninety Two.
 Eight Thousand One Hundred and Ninety Two. Four Thousand and Ninety Six.
 Four Thousand and Ninety Six. Two Thousand and Forty Eight.
 Two Thousand and Forty Eight. One Thousand and Twenty Four.
 One Thousand and Twenty Four. Five Hundred and Twelve.
 Five Hundred and Twelve. Two Hundred and Fifty Six.
 Two Hundred and Fifty Six. One Hundred and Twenty Eight.
 One Hundred and Twenty Eight. Sixty Four.
 Sixty Four. Thirty Two.
 Thirty Two. Sixteen.
 Sixteen. Eight.
 Eight. Four.
 Four. Two.
 Two. One.
 One

1 1.2 2.4 4.8 8.16 16.32 32.64 64.128 128.256 256.512 512.1024 1024.2048 2048.4096 4069.8192 8192.4096 4096.2048 2048.1024 1024.512 512.256 256.128 128.64 64.32 32.16 16.8 8.4 4.2 2.1 1	I wonder what infinity is like. It is the unfathomable. For everything has its beginning and its end. There is no sense without order. No order without understanding. Yet how can I comprehend the incomprehensible? I am like a river that seeks to flow against itself. A plant intent on leaning towards the shade. How can I begin? When can I begin? Before I was me, I was me. Before my self, I existed. Before existence I was cells, before cells, I was the singular. Before the singular I was deep in the omnipotent. I dwelled with Him who dwells. I was not an idea, I was a desire. You wanted me as I want you. Bound by an invisible thread we can never be separated. It is the cells which separate. And again. And again. Separate yet together. Many parts, One Body. I am a spiral, spinning to the edge of salvation. I shall never fall into the abyss. That hand that made me. The hand that made the stars. I am the product of The Master Craftsman. It is His hand ready to catch me. The folds of His skin keep me safe.	1 1.2 2.4 4.8 8.16 16.32 32.64 64.128 128.256 256.512 512.1024 1024.2048 2048.4096 4069.8192 8192.4096 4096.2048 2048.1024 1024.512 512.256 256.128 128.64 64.32 32.16 16.8 8.4 4.2 2.1 1
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I am not my own yet totally myself

Mapped out

It is my uncharted course already
blown through fire and wind

I was bare at head into being
I am written in ink and stone

From the enormity of a limitless universe

majestic that beats the rhythm of time itself
through veins that flow with MERCY and a Heart

of His tongue to the tip of His pen
In His image I was bound. From the tip
of the never ending inkwell

DEPTHS

scripted from the depths of the

being

I am the scrawling of the writer's quill
I was carved into stone.

Before the slate rose from the ground
unpinned and

In His plan was I before your
Before I was in your sight I was in His Mind

and my insatiable quenching
I found my thirst

of the ocean

In the salt studded mist
Like a seedling embedded in the clouds
Only where I have been

I know not where I am going

Thrust into the echo of time passed
The flicker
The Heavens opened and I was there

The Divide

What is there between light and dark?
Where is the warm, the habitable zone?
I am lost in the divide.

What is there between time and stillness?
Where is the limit and where is my rhythm?
I am lost in the divide.

What is there between air and space?
Where is the breath and what is its purpose?
I am lost in the divide.

How can I be here when my gaze rests over there?
How should I know my surroundings in the dark?
I am lost in the divide.

What is between the featherlight free-fall and the weighted anchor?
How can I remain when my soul is in flight?
I am lost in the divide.

When is between eternity and the past?
How can I know the difference between the untouchable?
I am lost in the divide.

Why do you fear when all is in my hands?
You are not lost, you are home.
I am in the divide.

You know my voice that echos,
Through the silence it reaches you,
I am in the divide.

I am forever and I am now,
I am the past and I was before,
I am in the divide.

I am your grounding and your flying,
Be still and rest in me,
I am in the divide.

Keep your eyes firm on me,
Do not blink lest you miss a beat,
I am in the divide.

I am the orchestrator of time,
I am beyond the limit,
I am in the divide.

I am the light that dispels the darkness,
I am the habitual,
I am in the divide.

I am calling to you from afar,
I am closer than you could know,
I am in the divide.



The birds echo the song of a time long ago.
The forests, the very lungs of the earth, inhale Your beauty.
Your fingerprint rests on the dewfall.
For you are water in the arid land, the oasis among the sand dunes.
You are companion to the traveller. The journey, destination and the first step forward.

It is you I long for when the earth turns black.
You who visits me when I am abandoned.
Before me, all was black. I was blind as to my own purpose.
Nothing but the abyss. No echoing bird, no water's edge.
The black is silent. The night where things move unnoticed.
Not by You however, for You see all the is unseen. You watch from afar all the goes unnoticed.

This darkness is but a vision before me. You called my name from before time. It is your voice that echoes through the mountains. As wind rustles the silver birch, Your golden voice causes my soul to shake. It is your voice that breaks it from its cage. Your voice that undoes the lock. I lost the key before I new how precious the contents was. But You, You are the key. The key that no one could ever lose.

My ears are unlocked. Like the needle that scrapes the record he hears his Master's voice. It is a secret language, spoke only by the child and His Father. Your words no ear can decipher, instead it is the soul that interprets. The soul that returns with a dialogue beyond voice. It is silent yet deafening. It is calm and yet ferocious. The cage is demolished. Stone turned Love. For you are Love itself. To know Love, is to know You.

The spittle and the sand. The Highest and the lowest. Between your fingerprint and mercy, I am not longer blind. It is I who have been closed. Mine own eyes i have screwed tight shut. For only fools rely on worldly wealth. Your's is a riches beyond zeros. My eyes have been opened and day is now night. The cactus that stood alone in the sandstorm is no longer parched. For water is life in the desert. You are Life in this arid land. You are the river that brings new Grace.

I was a pebble on the shoreside but you made me mountain

I was a teardrop in the cloud but you made me an ocean

I can no longer blink. What is the blink of an eye but a millennia. For fear of blinking and I miss Your marvels.

I am forever (a) wake.

I am the crest of a wave I am the pinnacle and the precipitation I am the stars and the galaxies and the nebulae I am
 cosmic eruptions through time and the smallest atom in space I am the swirl on the snail and the twist in the hurricane I
 am algorithms and angles and equilateral triangles I am the twist in the tale and the wind in the sail Where
 you wonder I wander I am the intricate detail The slightest difference The momentum and the reason I
 am the I am When you look up what do you see When you look down where is there to go How
 often have I called your name How often have I fallen Fallen on deaf ears I remember your finger print It
 rests on my heart There is room enough for all creation How should I call you How should you
 call yourself Look into your heart
 The silence is deafening and the darkness blinding There is One who brings sight in His touch a cure in His embrace I have
 been chosen I have been set aside not for neglect but for nourishment My nourishment is Your Breath
 and my hope is Your Word You are the moisture that clenches the thirst of my roots Such Joy and
 fulfilment shall I spread for it is Your work that I must undertake Why should men
 search for gold that will tarnish and for food that will decay Yours is a jewel no crown be
 fit for Yours is a Bread that shall never fade away
 Yours is a banquet that will forever be in abundance How should I know your voice The
 vacuum of space is no obstacle for Your might
 In the silence you speak volumes across galaxies you stride with ease For nothing shall get between
 you and I Am I the only should left on earth Where are my enemies when You are my shield Is
 the earth so wet and the seas so barren The balance of life has been displaced Where is my
 fear of the night Where is the victory in my opponents hand They are not there
 All is held in your hand
 Why should I deserve to call this place my own How can it be that You have seen fit for me to tread the
 path I remember the peace of Your stillness
 At once was I flung to earth A please made for me here from a place made for me there I had no knowledge no
 question no understanding
 How can it be that I gaze where once I flew What is this all about What am I to be now that I start afresh
 Will it please you for me to decide What choice is there but to sit in your bosom Your pulse beating the rhythm of time I forever chose my Saviour
 my Hope and my Creator Him who dented the moon and scorched the desert For in the land of the sun you will never desert Where do I go
 from here Where is my map and my compass Where are the sandals and there the shade by the oasis I do not need to fear I
 need only call and You will be by my side How is it that you have trusted me I know not what or why or even how
 but You You know the way I shall turn to The One who made The One who designs orchestrates wills wants
 desires has Freedom comes in the relinquishing Why hold onto power that I can never call my own For power is
 entrapment to me Nothing can supersede Your mind Yours is a colour unknown A tune beyond composition An
 orchestra A symphony A silence How could I compete against myself It is my other that I hinder Where now is this alternate me
 Where is this separation the line the divide the difference I can see no line except the minute span of the universe this universe
 Your universe How could I hope to understand when it is my own self I try to hide For you gave me Life and yet from Life I
 chose to hide Under a rock I hid my sight How can your patience stretch Is it forever that you will wait Is it
 forever that have been waiting I am unworthy and yet you see my worth I fail and yet You are unfailing Can I ever
 comprehend a glimpse Make sense of the serene Who is this other self I have been battling Where is this weaker me I am
 yet to conquer There is no other except You Just You Just Me A solitary togetherness A solo duet You who are Three I

was not spat out but spat at I was not snatched I am precious in Your eyes though the eyes of the monster look on me in despair I am my
 own worst enemy and yet you still choose me The world will try forever to scream over your silence Their breath will expire before You
 contemplate moving Where do they get this entitlement Why do they insist on control Yours is a balm for the marks
 left by nails Their grip can only last so long As for me I will hold onto You with a firmness that will never grow weak for You
 are the strength when I tire I am glad to You hold me I am glad that Yours is the smile I see when others
 sneer for who can ever come close
 As for me I shall find my footsteps by following Yours How Blessed to walk in Your ways to
 follow where You lead For you have born me and yet further still borne me When I grow weak I
 will be carried When I wander I will be brought back When I forget I shall be reminded and When I turn
 see how far we have come I have a plan and that plan is You You are the map
 From the silence of the biggest bang to the deafening whisper in an eternal ear I shall exist on the
 edge I am the crest of a wave



I get lost in the darkness. You are there.
I drown in waters too deep. You are there.

I leap from mountains and you catch me.
Your hand has made me and guides me home.

**The eye of The Lord is upon me,
His listening servant am I**

The hungry arrive. You do not turn away.
Those who thirst are quenched to the full.

My face hides from the sunlight. You shine.
Shadows are scattered by your sweeping arm.

**The eye of The Lord is upon me,
His listening servant am I**

Who is the One who waits at the finish line?
I am tired in the race,. My strength is renewed.

A rich man counts his assets. The wise man
counts his blessings. You dwell in their hearts.

**The eye of The Lord is upon me,
His listening servant am I**

I called our for you and you answered me.
On your heart is my name forever etched.

Who am I that I should address The Lord?
I am lost in the mercy of of his gaze.

**The eye of The Lord is upon me,
His listening servant am I**

How many the works your hand has crafted.
I sit in your silence and I hear your voice call.

In my rest I am still your waiting child. The
servant of The Lord forever waits on his God.

**The eye of The Lord is upon me,
His listening servant am I**

What is the cost of walking on your path? Is it
my very self I abandon in order to find?

Like a bird that soars above the canyon, so am
I flying. Your breath gives lift to my wings.

**The eye of The Lord is upon me,
His listening servant am I**

The lapping waves, the stars at night, the
blossom that rests on the tree

The mighty gale and the gentle breeze all
whisper your name unto me.

**The eye of The Lord is upon me,
His listening servant am I**

Slabs

Alpha Beta Gamma Delta Epsilon Zeta Eta Theta Iota

I think one day they will invent interstellar travel. I'm not too sure who "they" are. To an alien of course, we are the aliens

I sat in my chair today. All day. I didn't hear a voice. I just sat there. Thinking thoughts. I think I did but I can't be sure

I didn't understand science at school. That big chart with all the squares. Still did it for A-level. Failed. Thankfully

Where do babies come from? Why do I feel this way? Who am I supposed to be? Who do I want to be? Why did you look at me like that? Do you think the earth might really be flat? What if I'm not actually here? Why don't we talk about this some other time? Am I supposed to know you? Isn't this the bit where you talk? Can you get pills for that? How many others are there? Why am I so scared? Do you recognise your reflection? Haven't we been here before? How long have you felt like this? You do know who I am don't you? So do you actually know where babies come from or not?

You
r
mot
her
and
I
use
d to
com
e
her
e all
the
time
...
Shh
hhh

You must never feel abandoned. I am here for you. I always have been. No one can take you away from me. You are mine and I will sustain you. Smile. You are safe with me

Do you remember that song you always used to sing? Will you do it for me?

Lambda Mu Nu Xi Omicron Pi Rho Sigma

So, there are three varieties of blood vessels. We have veins, arteries and capillaries. Now, if you took all the blood vessels and laid them out, you'd actually cover 100,000 miles.

It is important to always look up. Wherever you are, indoors or out, there is always something fascinating up above. Sometimes it's architecture, sometimes it's the moon sometimes you just look up and get completely lost. Look up and you don't look what's ahead

You know that pink haze you get at dusk, just after the sun has disappeared? I think that's the nicest colour I have ever seen. God's paintbrush. That's what my Grandma used to call it. Can you imagine if the sky was a canvas and every day God had to start again from scratch? He'd need a lot of paint. Especially blue. And that pink I like

Tau
Upsilon
Phi Chi
Psi
Omega

I sometimes imagine there is rope dangling from the sky. Nothing sinister like hanging and all that but just a thick rope, you know, like the ones you used to use at school with the thick rubber at the end. And the rope is made of the spiralling and it's a sort of off white. The only thing is I can't see the other end, the bit in the sky, it just seems to go on forever. I don't know whether I should pull it. No. I think I'll climb it later

In through the nose. Out through the mouth. In, two three, four - hold, two, three, four - Out, two, three, four. Again. In, two, three, four - hold two, three, four, five, six, seven, keep holding... I said KEEP HOLDING

It was last Friday when it happened. Unexpected of course. You just know when the phone rings in the night that it's never good news. I'd only just got into bed, been working nights. Again. Funny really, all that will come to an end once the will is sorted. I spent most of my life with that man and yet I hardly knew him. He had his funny ways, people do. He always had serve a cup of tea with the handle pointing to three o'clock. A throwback from his Army days I shouldn't wonder. I think I'll miss his smell most. I got photos, I've got videos but you can't capture a person's smell. It's like their DNA. You can't see it but it's always there

What are you doing after this? Do you fancy going down the chippy? You know Sandra works down the chippy now right? You know her husband left her right? Who know who for yeah? Well if I tell you, can you keep it to yourself yeah? You know it's not good to gossip?

Silence. I don't like it. In fact sometimes I can't bare it. Perhaps I'm afraid of it? It just seems so pointless. It's a waste of time. As I see it where are on earth for a finite period and therefore we have a duty to ensure that every beat of every second is filled with something. Anything. Even if it's just boring stuff at least we are just pouring away time. I mean do you actually enjoy silence? Like what do you actually do during it?

I Listen

The seed bears a shoot
and the shoot bears fruit
and the fruit bears the seed

I'm not sure
that I belong
here right
now or now or
now or now or
now or now or
even now

Do you think other people feel like this? Have you ever seen a shooting star? How many grains of sand are there on the earth? Have you ever felt like you were flying? How many times have you been in love? Have I ever been in Love? Will you marry me? Is it too soon? Do you have a driving licence? When did you last sneeze? What's the biggest secret you've ever been told? Do you think they will put me in prison? How deep is the ocean? Would you like to breath underwater? Have you ever felt like you were drowning? Would you help me out of the water?

Settle down, settle down. There really is no need for all this noise. What happened to the golden age of silence? People are forever in a blaze at the minute. Take your time. Be still. Just be. It's hard you know, all this being. Quite tiring in fact. Do yourself a favour and have some time out. You'll not get there any quicker by rushing. We will always reach the end you know. Don't panic.

T	H	S	W
h	a	tr	ill
e	p	e	
s	p	a	A
e	y	m	I
		s	w
A	T		a
r	i	T	y
e	m	h	s
	e	a	
A		t	B
			e

Come with me to
a far away place,
We'll just leave
your footprints
and no other
trace,
Be quick as our
journey means
going through
space,
Just you and me
for all time.

Do not say
goodbye and do
not pack your
things,
Can you not hear
our path as it
joyfully sings,
About peace,
about Love and
the Hope that it
brings,
Just you and me
for all time.

There's a place in
my arms and a
place in my soul,
And no matter the
distance, keep
them as your goal,
Then together
you'll see that we
will become
whole,
Just you and me
for all time.

I am an anomaly.
I am an entity. I
am not who I was
and nor am I who
I shall be. I am
the inescapable
me. Run away
and I am there.
Stay here and I
will too. We are in
this together. It's
you and me. It's
me and you. Do
not try to
understand. Do
not try to hide.
There is nothing
to fear. I have
overcome fear.
Fear need only
fear me. Have I
always been this
way? Which way
am I yet to try?
Who can I
comprehend the
incomprehensible
? It is a fool's
errand to think it
possible. Where
does that leave
me? And you?
And us? Will
there always be
this many. When
will I sit and rest?
I am running
forever to the
starting line.

Roots in the
earth which
soak up
underneath, the
height of all
longing, the
source of belief.

You are an
anomaly. Yo are
an entity. I once
watched a leaf for
a whole year.
Charted its whole
cycle. Tiny to
mighty. Green to
golden. Have you
even seen a leaf
fall from its line? It
doesn't fall. It
floats. It doesn't
float. It flies. Its
final leap into the
abyss. The end.
Yet so graceful.
It's silent. Nothing
to hear except the
deafening silence.
There will be no
one to catch it
when it goes. It
just spins. You
are a leaf. Your
season has not
yet come. Sit
patiently and
enjoy the view. Its
nice up here. It's
secret. No one
will find us. You
are incognito. No
body knows you
except me. I know
everything there
is to know. I am
all knowing itself.
You are safe.

The stems are
like concrete,
the bark flakes
away. There's a
rumour that they
might not ask
me to stay.

R	L	F	A
o	a	o	
c	y	u	B
k		n	e
	M	d	tt
T	y	a	e
h	s	ti	r
a	el	o	
t	f	n	M
			e
I	O	O	.
	n	f	

Even through fire,
though sea and
earthquake,
And despite the
confusion and
bravery it takes,
There's a Chosen
One coming to
wipe out mistakes,
Just you and me
for all time.

Grab hold my
hand and keep
your grip tight,
We've a journey
that takes us
through dark
towards light,
And I promise
you'll never have
seen such a sight,
Just you and me
for all time.

Though it scary,
you won't be
alone,
As I'm reaping,
through patience,
the seeds that
were sewn,
And I've come all
this way just to
bring my child
home,
Just you and me
for all time.



ONE DAY I WILL REST IN YOUR ARMS,
YOUR SPIRIT MY REFUGE AND MY
DELIGHT. O WISE IS THE ONE WHO
TRUSTS IN THE LORD. HOW MANY ARE
THE STARS YOU HAVE SCATTERED OVER
THE EARTH. THE WATERS REST STILL IN
THE NIGHTFALL. THE SUN RISES AND
SHINES YOUR MAJESTY. AM I THE
SERVANT ON WHICH YOUR LIGHT
SHINES? WHO AM I TO JOURNEY INTO
THE UNKNOWN? HOW CAN I LET MY
FAULT NOT HOLD ME BACK? I HAVE
DUTY DESIGNED FOR ME. I HAVE BEEN
SET APART IN YOUR WISDOM. YOU
KNOW ME AND YOU LOOK DOWN ON
ME. I SHALL BE AFRAID NO LONGER.
FOR YOU HAVE WRITTEN MY MAP. I
AM FOLLOWING THE UNCHARTED SELF

Why do you search without for the things that are found within? Have you no faith? No understanding of the might that dwells within you? You are a child in your Father's eyes. Children see the world as wonder. Everything anew. So too must you look within yourself with wonder and with awe. For you are made anew. Do not let what you want to see cloud your vision. Search only for the truth that rests in your heart. For you have been sealed with mark of your maker. His signature across you. For The Lord takes delight in all that He has made. All of creation cries out His goodness

Cross

I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D COME. **Didn't really have a choice did I?** OF COURSE YOU DID. **How?** NO ONE FORCES YOU TO BE HERE - ONLY STAY IF YOU ACTUALLY WANT TO. **Look, can we just get this over with?** WHY ARE YOU BEING LIKE THIS? **Because I feel betrayed?** BETRAYED! HOW ARE YOU THE ONE THAT'S BEEN BETRAYED? **Here we go, I knew this was a bad idea.** YOU'RE THE ONE WHO LEFT ME. **Yes.** THEN HOW ARE YOU BETRAYED? **Well I didn't go off with someone else, I just left.** FOR WHAT? **For reasons.** WHAT REASONS? **Just to be with me for a while.** WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? **Look can I just get my stuff and go please?** I DESERVE TO KNOW WHY DON'T I? **You wouldn't understand.** NO, YOU'RE RIGHT I DON'T UNDERSTAND. **So can I just get my stuff and go?** IS THERE SOMEONE ELSE? THERE IS ISN'T THERE? **No. Not quite.** WELL WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? **It means...** It just means that I want to go away for a while. **WHERE?** That doesn't matter, can I just have my books back please? **FINE.** Thank you. **WILL I SEE YOU AGAIN?** **Probably.** **God said He needs to speak to me.** WELL LET ME KNOW WHAT HE SAYS...

I had a friend once who was blind. He wasn't born blind, but something happened to him at school. Never found out what. Every time I mentioned it, it just got shrugged off. He used to wear those dark glasses. Couldn't see a thing. I was thinking about him earlier and I began to wonder: do you think it's better to have been blind from the start or better to have seen the world for a while and then lose it all? I'm not sure you know. Is it better to never have seen a thing or to see it and then have it taken away from you? He was a nice guy, wasn't bitter. He used to get me to describe things to him. How do you describe a colour? All he knew was black. It's funny because he was an optimistic man and I couldn't understand it. Look what he was dealt and yet he was hopeful. I suppose there is something exciting in the unknown. The power of the imagination. To him, the world was a pallet of sound. Noise was his pigment. He loved nature. Stroking grass. Feet in the pond. It was his funeral last week. I went along. Pay my respects and that. Everyone wore all the colours of the rainbow. I wore black.

Chapter Two

In chapter one I examined linguistic approaches to deconstructing Biblical text and held that lens up to performance practice. Chapter two seeks to build on this foundation by examining practice against the backdrop of the relationship between (faith)identity and psychology. Beginning by highlighting performance that engages with the themes of this thesis, the practitioners highlighted can be separated into four categories. Firstly Nearly Real Theatre who approach the self as a destination to which we journey. Followed by Haylee McGee who works with objects associated with past relationships in order to transition and make sense of her current self. Thirdly Midlands initiative Ramps on the Moon who demonstrate the fluidity and transformative nature of text, followed by writer and dramaturg Katie O'Reilly who builds on those textual foundations and explores the place of identity amongst the transitions. Shifting the gaze towards the psychological, I shall then address theoretical approaches to the working mind. Exploring the arguments offered by thinkers such as Carl Jung and Richard Russo, attention shall then be placed on unconscious. Enquiring into the relationship between the self and the mind, the practice of dream writing is discussed and in particular Russo's definition of the term. Engaging with the work of practitioners Susan Gannon and Hélène Cixous allows for a working example of the significance of dream writing in regards to understanding who we are. Building on these foundations we shall then examine the significance of dreaming in the Bible, before finally addressing Samuel Beckett's absurdist play *Waiting for Godot*, with the he piece providing a textual example of the themes identified throughout the chapter. Addressing the absurdity of life, the play


scrutinises topics such as faith, hope, despair and disappointment, all whilst presenting identity as multi-layered and often at odds with others around us.

i. Transitions

Performance collective Nearly Real Theatre began life at a 2013 festival in Totnes, Devon. According to their website, the company exist as 'a learning lab', offering an eleven week transformational 'journey' resulting in a festival showing of 're-authored stories' (Nearly Real Theatre, 2018). Of their approach to solo and autobiographical theatre, founder Mo Cohen explains that the process delivers a sense of 'freedom' gained not by 'finding the answer but by grappling with the question' and that one chooses to go on this journey 'because it is the only journey that makes any sense' (ibid). Cohen explains that the process offered by the company is 'an endless exploration [...] one that is designed to generate more questions than answers' (ibid). This is symbolic not only of the re-contextualisation Derrida invites us to be aware of, but is perhaps also indicative of a continual need to chip away at who we are. The course consists of a four step process described as:

1. 'Undertaking an enquiry in which the person is both researcher (of their personal history, the dynamics of their relationships and so on) and research subject'
2. 'Writing, devising and rehearsing a solo autobiographical performance'
3. 'Reflecting on this work and refining the upcoming performance'
4. 'Giving the performance' - 'The audience becomes engaged in a transformational process and experiences an enquiry into the human condition that is likely to resonate with them'.

(ibid)

Whilst I would argue that step four is a bold culminating statement, the company's approach to text and the self are significant in my research. Steps one to three could easily be used as a metaphor for the practice-based-research methodology of this thesis as undoubtedly in this project it is the self that is both enquiry and enquirer. Not only does this place the performer as theatre maker (particularly in the  marked work of Chapter One) but also as the very text of the performance. This shamanistic approach is discussed later on in relation to Hélène Cixous, but firstly I shall highlight the work of practitioner Haley McGee who also develops her practice by allowing performance to shape it along the way.

Spanning 'storytelling [...] clown, improv, stand-up and dance' McGee describes herself as a 'solo performer, theatre maker' who 'celebrates the live-ness of theatre' (Haley McGee, 2018). Of her first show *OH MY IRMA*, she writes that it 'began as a 2-minute monologue' which 'gradually grew into full length show' through performing and it is this process which 'informed how [she] makes solo shows' (Hayley McGee, 2018). This approach is not only akin to Cohen's four step methodology, but it has informed my own research structure also. McGee's latest production *The Ex-Boyfriend Yard Sale* (touring in 2019) explores the re-contextualisation of text. Developed as a result of owing money on her credit card, McGee takes eight items given to her from previous boyfriends and re-contextualises them in order to make sense of her present self. The transition begins with McGee asking 'can we translate sentimental value into cold hard cash [...] why does Hayley want to - and why now?' (Haley McGee, 2018). Rather than the piece being founded in linguistics relating to the self, the 'performance text' as Richard Schechner terms, is in fact the eight items (Schechner 2013:227). McGee has an intrinsic attachment

to the objects as they can each represent a former self. They are aspects of her life which she has left behind and yet simultaneously is still attached to them insofar as they are being used to make sense of the present day McGee. As she herself argues: 'I am fascinated [by] the wars we wage against our former selves' (Haley McGee, 2018). There is here a re-contextualisation (and distancing) of who we are now from our 'former selves' (ibid). Arguably the transitioning textuality of the performance objects is an inanimate representation of the transition taking place within McGee. The examples that follow also showcase the transitional qualities of text, this time from ink on the page, to varying spectrum of silent and spoken language.

Ramps on the Moon is a six year initiative funded by seven Midlands based producing theatres. Through 'integrating disabled and non-disabled performers' the initiative aims to highlight 'the under representation and employment of disabled people' within the theatre industry (Ramps on the Moon, 2018). I would argue that in addition to achieving this they also succeed in highlighting the flexible nature of text in performance. Their 2018 production of Timberlake Wertenbaker's *Our Country's Good* (staged at Nottingham Playhouse) transitioned text on the page into four distinct categories: British Sign Language (BSL), captioning, audio description and shared vocalisation. Whilst the initial three categories (which were integrated into the performance by the actors on stage) are becoming increasingly more commonplace in mainstream performance, it is the final one that particularly resonates with this investigation. This is because it takes the ink on the page and re-contextualises it in several ways simultaneously. The character of Duckling is played by Emily Rose Salter. Salter, who is deaf and physically unable to speak her lines, not only speaks through BSL but also through fellow performer Sapphire Joy. Joy, who despite

playing another major role (Mary Brenham), adopts a different tone and stance to deliver Salter's lines. In this respect the text on the page has not only transitioned into movement language (BSL) but simultaneously to another performer and back to Salter. The one starting point (ink) has thus recontextualised itself into a range of vocal, physical and visual forms. This reimagining will be highlighted in detail further on in this chapter in relation to dreaming and my own practice also.

Actor Garry Robson, who performed in *Our Country's Good*, also worked with writer and dramaturg Katie O'Reilly in her 2018 production *And Suddenly I Disappear: The Singapore/UK 'd' Monologues* (Attenborough Arts Centre Leicester). Alongside sharing a performer there was evidence of further crossover in the piece's exploration of text (BSL, captioning, shared vocalisation) and in the way it explores the layered self and its relationship with text. It is not until late on in the one act performance that any of the six actors identify themselves by name. When doing so, accompanied by a description of who they are, it is the very text of such description that appears incongruous to their physical presence. At one point, performer Sarah Beer informs us that 'the body that this voice belongs to is 6 feet tall', whereas physically her height is considerably less than that (*And Suddenly I Disappear*, 2018). What is significant here is the relationship between text, voice and identity. On one level the text presents questions of authorial ownership: Whose voice is this? Whose body is this? Whose text is this? And yet ironically it is upon text (both audible and captioned) that Beer is reliant to establish herself. It is the textual collaboration of voice, BSL and captioning that allows Beer to portray who she understands her self to be.

What links all the practitioners thus far is the relationship between text and identity via means of transition. Nearly Real Theatre offers a transitioning journey,

McGee making sense of her contemporary identity through transitioning via the objects, *Our Country's Good* transitioning assigned character texts to various outputs and in *And Suddenly I Disappear: The Singapore/UK 'd' Monologues* by transitioning text to who the performer understands themselves to be, despite it appearing incongruent. It is perhaps this last point, coupled with the McGee's approach towards previous selves that links neatly with my own practice. What is fascinating about the practitioners above is the sense of transitioning an internal self to the external world, though the two terms seem to juxtapose one another. The former is secret, hidden from view, accessible only by us and those we choose to share it with. The latter is for all to observe and make of what they will. Exploring the relationship between the two it is important to begin at that most intimate area alluded to in Chapter One: the mind.

There have been many psychologists who have offered their interpretations of the functioning mind. Perhaps most synonymous is Sigmund Freud though there have been other more philosophical approaches offered by thinkers such as Jacques Lacan. One such interpretation is offered by Swiss psychologist (and once student of Freud's) Carl Jung. Referring to the mind as the 'psyche', Jung divides it into two parts: the 'conscious' and the 'unconscious' (Jung 1978:162 and 18). At the heart of the former he places the 'ego', whose role is to either keep thoughts and information in our awareness or else repress them away to the latter (ibid). Freida Fordham provides a neat summary of the unconscious in her book *An Introduction to Jung's Psychology*, where she again divides that aspect of the mind into two parts: the 'personal unconscious' and the 'collective unconscious' (Fordham 1991:22 and 23). The 'personal unconscious' sits just out of reach of the conscious realm, whilst the 'collective unconscious' (ibid) resides deep within the unconscious realm and is

comprised of what Jung terms as 'archetypes' (Jung 179:43). Simply put, 'archetypes' are those distinct patterns of human behaviour found around the world, even in civilisations that have not interacted with one another. For example this might include theatre, philosophy or religiosity and the want to worship. In this thesis that explores the discovery of a true self over the creation of one, Jung offers us a methodology to which we can approach the task in hand and he terms this as 'individuation' (Storr 1995:81). The 'individuation' process is one of balance (ibid). It seeks to allow a person to achieve a happy equilibrium between the conscious and unconscious realms through means of confronting aspects of themselves or their past¹. On doing so, Jung argues that the 'psyche' can function at its best, thus achieving maximum efficiency, or perhaps reworded, our best self (Jung 178:162). Developing the argument that the mental sphere can contribute to our understanding of self, and amalgamating this with performance practice, it is appropriate for us to examine where the two meet and I argue that this is best found in our dreams.

¹ Neatly displayed in the practice of Hayley McGee

Dialogue with Practice: Pillar One

Compiled of extracts from my own dream diary, the accompanying practice to this chapter takes on the structural form of pillars. In keeping with the symbolic use of the number three, the trio of pillars serve as a construct without a roof, though all are rooted in the same origins: the dreaming self. This is realised textually with the final line of each pillar reading 'It has always been just me'. Designed to (literally) support the self, the three pillars each adopt their very own identity. Firstly, using prominent imagery found in the pages of the diary, *Pillar One* meanders through religiosity, familiarity, emotion and the reoccurrence of flowers. Exploring ideas raised by Nearly Real Theatre, the pillar is itself a 'learning lab' which seeks to represent a 'transformational journey' as well as the subject of 'freedom' (Nearly Real Theatre, 2018). Wandering away from topic, though always centralised by the sunflowers, the practice presents an 'enquiry into the human condition that is likely to resonate' with the other (ibid). With this in mind, the piece is intended to be recognisable as dreamlike (and therefore resonate in its style) whilst simultaneously remaining very much individual to my experience. Akin to Hayley McGee's piece *The Ex-Boyfriend Yard Sale* the pillar recontextualises its base material. Where McGee uses historical objects with which she still has an attachment, I use the historical documenting of the dreams (with which I am innately attached), in order to make sense of the present-day self, questioning what the dreams may mean in the waking world. Interestingly (though unforeseen when I began) I approach the dream diary as an extension of my self. To that end it is often difficult to ascertain which parts to work with and perhaps which parts should remain concealed. With a leaning towards openness I use the strands of the diary that seem to reoccur or link together (flowers/church/(un)familiarity) but acknowledge it to be troublesome knowing just how open one should be. This is perhaps one of the negative repercussions of an intrinsic link between the (private) self and the (public) practice.

The transitioning exploration of Ramps on the Moon also seeps into the practice. Continuing their theme of realising ink on the page in multiple ways, my own practice can be seen to span four levels. Firstly, the base dream itself transitioned into diary text, followed by a reshaping into theatrical text and finally realised in performance. In this way *Pillar One* seeks to resemble the transitioning nature of dreaming: 'It all seems so real and yet I know it is far from reality'.

ii. Dreams of the Divine

Dreaming is truly personal and internal. Though there exists support for the learning of lucid dreaming (choosing what we want to dream), for the majority dreaming is out of our control. It is interesting that Jung situates dreaming as a means by which the unconscious can be accessed. If this is indeed the case, it is ironic that the freeing of such thoughts and information should come at a time of paralysis and even then, freed only as far as our imagination permits. What happens

then when practitioners keep account of their nocturnal adventures and transition them into the practice of dream writing?

Theorist Richard Russo offers an approach to dream writing defining it as ‘fiction or poetry using dream material as a starting point’, and that such material ‘may draw on a single dream or series of dreams, stay close to the content of the original dream or depart from it substantially’ (Russo, 2003). There is a poetic nature in Russo’s description and a fluidity in its lack of parameters. Just like the dream itself, the product is permitted to roam and wander as it develops. In his article *Dream Poetry and Dream Work* he separates dream writing from dream interpretation arguing that the latter ‘is to arrive at a statement [...] about the “meaning” of the dream, which may be applied to the waking life issues and concerns of the dreamer’ (ibid). Briefly addressed in Chapter One, the interpreting of dreams lends itself to aforementioned human quality to reason and understand why. Russo’s separation places dream writing away from this exercise, appreciating the visions for what they are objectively, rather than forming a subjective response. Indeed a little further on he writes that the sole purpose of ‘dream writing is to create a work of art’ (ibid). Furthermore he adds that any ‘therapeutic’ or contribution to ‘personal growth’ are in fact ‘incidental or secondary outcomes’ and not the ‘primary purpose of the work’ (ibid). At first glance this may seem problematic to my argument, after all, if discovery of a true self is indeed linked to the mind it seems appropriate to tie ourselves to the content of the dream. On closer inspection however, and remembering that Russo offers a methodological approach towards the practice in his article, it seems fairer to remove our immediate responses to what we dream and employ such imagery as text (quite literally) objectively to the practice for us then to revisit subjectively post-creation. The article goes on to offer an

excerpt from Russo's dream journal along with the finished poetic practice. It is afterwards that Russo approaches the piece from a psychological viewpoint and introduces Jung into his interpretation. Exploring Jung's notion of 'the active imagination' (which resituates the imagination as an accessible function of the body), Russo writes that the term comprises of 'two stages: first, letting the unconscious come up, and second, coming to terms with the unconscious' (ibid). In the case of dream writing, stage one would be the act of dreaming itself, and stage two approaching what surfaces objectively before forming a subjective conclusion after the writing practice was complete. The article ends with the thought that 'dreaming is not an inherently different state of consciousness from waking' and that 'the two states may be viewed as points along the same continuum' (ibid). It is an interesting notion applicable to this thesis. If indeed the act of dreaming and the act of alert consciousness are points along the same path, it could be argued that this pathway is indeed the self. We could possibly be the link between the unrestricted happenings in our dreams and the restricted happenings of our everyday life.

In her 2004 journal article '*Dream(e)scapes*': *A Poetic Experiment in Writing a Self*, theatre practitioner and critical thinker Susan Gannon, attends Hélène Cixous' 'school of dreams' (Gannon, 2004). The process, which involves reflecting on the fragmented language of dreams, makes up the second stage of Cixous' work *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing* (1993) (ibid). Akin to the work of Nearly Real Theatre, Abigail Bray describes the book as 'a type of shamanistic journey towards the experience of writing' (Bray 2004:68). Comprised of fragments from a dream diary kept over several years, Gannon constructs a poem which 'trek[s] into the valley of the unconscious and writing' (Gannon, 2004). It is an interesting way to describe the act of venturing into the unknown and one which perhaps supports the idea that

there is indeed something to be discovered. Poetry, she argues creates 'other sets of truths' to 'those more singular truths created in other types of text' (ibid). Like dreaming, poetry can often veer of course, juxtapose or lack transparency, yet similarly to the self remains as a fragmented totality. In relation to dreaming Cixous writes that at 'night, tongues are loosened, books open and reveal themselves: what I can't do, my dreams do for me' (Cixous 1991:45). For Gannon, dreams operate in a language 'outside the phallogentric economy', giving 'access to the other within, the other that is not coded and bounded' (Gannon, 2004). What is clear from descriptions of both Gannon and Cixous, is the freedom in dreaming. For Gannon her 'other within' is able to live without constraint (ibid) and for Cixous also there is a sense of release from the things she 'can't do' (Cixous 1991:45). There is a sense of ephemerality found in both dreaming and the practice of writing. In his 1967 work *Writing Degree Zero* French philosopher Roland Barthes offers a definition of writing. He explains that 'the formal identity of the writer is truly established only outside the permanence of grammatical norms and stylistic constants' (Barthes 1967:19-20). Through this, writing 'at last becomes a total sign, the choice of a human attitude, the affirmation of a certain Good' (ibid). In essence, it is not style or language that gives voice on paper, but that act of writing itself². It is this which supersedes stylistic constraints and where the 'attitude' is found, the 'total sign' and the flesh of the idea the author is trying to convey (ibid). He also identifies a paradox arguing that writing, as a sense of 'freedom', is trapped in 'a mere moment' (Barthes 1967:23). Highlighting the ephemerality of writing in this way, we are reminded of its intrinsic links to performance. There is something bittersweet about this realisation. Writing

² Which is also evidenced by Derrida when he argues that the self 'exists through writing' (Derrida and Ewald 1995:279).

as a means of unlocking/releasing who we are is an empowering prospect, yet the reality is that such liberty only exists for the duration of the act itself. Perhaps put differently, we might understand this not as a one time process, but as a series of smaller acts: a chipping away, a constant re-contextualisation. As Gannon observes in her 2006 article *The (Im)Possibilities of Writing the Self - Writing: French Poststructural Theory and Autoethnography*, 'Barthes theorised the self and writing in abstract' terms, and his 'vision of autobiography' was 'discontinuous, elliptical, fragmented' (Gannon, 2006). This 'abstract' approach is surely not too distant from Russo's call to objective dream capturing highlighted earlier (ibid).

In addition to Barthes' ephemerality of writing and performance therefore, I propose to add a third ephemerality: dreaming. It is in the unbounded spectrum of dreaming that one may argue we are free, and yet again exists only as long as we are asleep. Once awake we are again bound by our conscious thought or the 'phallogentric language' (Gannon, 2004). Of dream poetry, Gannon neatly explains that the 'poem becomes a textual construction site for the representation of a discontinuous fragmentary narrative and a version (or versions) of the self' (ibid). Interestingly, Jung's sense of unequal balance within, is reiterated by Cixous when she writes that for 'a long time [she] felt guilty: for having an unconscious' (Cixous 1991:45). This is perhaps indicative of a feeling of self-separation. Often we can dream scenarios that can leave us feel guilty or uncomfortable. Perhaps we can also dream actions that we would not consider performing in the conscious world. Might this guilt felt by Cixous be indicative of a need within us all to address our "dreaming self" not as other, but as fragment as the same "waking self" – or as Russo puts it – 'two states [...] along the same continuum'? (Russo, 2003).

Writing in *Psychoanalysis and Performance*, theorist Alan Read describes the title's two entities as 'offspring of the same ancestor: the placebo effect' (Campbell and Kear 2001:147). It is an interesting theory and one which I would extend to dreaming also. As mentioned above there is a sense of freedom and safety in the realm of the unconscious and yet, like the ephemerality of writing and performance, it is intangible. All may give the impression of comfort and distancing from the self, yet within all of them it is arguably the very self that we seek to encounter.

One playwright whose work explores the fractious relationship between the self and the mind is Sarah Kane. Premiering a year after her suicide, her play *4:48 Psychosis* (2000) is described by Aleks Sierz as being a 'modernist poem' (Sierz 2011:196). Consisting of fragmented monologues, conversations and stanzas, it is interesting that Sierz should choose poetry as means of description, which lends itself to the observations of Gannon and Cixous addressed earlier. In a nod to Jungian theory of the unbalanced mind, Kane writes: 'I need to become who I already am [...] and I will bellow forever at this incongruity' (Kane 2001:212). Later on in the play, she again appears to see herself as separate and existing in the realm of the mind: 'It is myself I have never met, whose face is pasted on the underside of my mind' (Kane 2001:245). Again this is synonymous with Gannon's understanding of a multitude of selves within the unconscious, where 'dreams give access to the other within': access which for Kane is forever out of reach (Gannon, 2004).

At this point in the discussion it is useful to reintroduce the topic of faith and examine where the Bible might offer clues towards the relationship between dreaming and identity. Throughout the Biblical narrative there exists numerous examples of dreaming. Perhaps one of the most famous is that of Joseph in the Old

Testament. The story, brought further into performance practice thanks to Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical adaptation, centres around a young man who is sold by his brothers to become a slave, only to find himself second in command to Pharaoh. The initial reason for selling their brother comes as a result of a combination of jealousy and of Joseph sharing his dreams with them. Genesis 37 sees Joseph saying to them:

'Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it'

(Genesis 37:6-7)

Infuriated by this, the brother's questioned him 'Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?' and they 'hated him all the more because of his dream'

(Genesis 37:8). What is interesting is that, akin to Gannon and the binds of phallogocentric language, Joseph is restricted (to the point of slavery) for revealing his inner visions. What is more is that the dream would act as a premonition further on in the story and thus it acted as a revelation of Joseph's true (or at the least, future) self. The brothers would indeed bow down to him and in this way, as observed by Russo and his continuum, the dream world and the waking world where points on the same pathway: that pathway being Joseph's life.

Further examples involving a second Joseph (this time husband of the Virgin Mary), are found in Matthew's Gospel. In fact, there are four such occasions where Joseph is visited by an angel in his dreams:

- Matthew 1:20-21 – 'an angel of The Lord appeared to him in a dream and said: 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from The Holy Spirit'.
- Matthew 2:13 – 'an angel of The Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up" he said "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him"

- Matthew 2:19-20 – ‘an angel of The Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said “Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead”’
- Matthew 2:22-23 – ‘Having been warned in a dream, he [Joseph] withdrew to the district of Galilee, and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth’

All of these dreams occur early on in the Gospel. The first example relates to Joseph not wanting to bring shame on his wife for conceiving before their marriage, with the other three pertaining to the safety of Christ. It is interesting that repeatedly it is an angel that appears in Joseph’s dreams. Unlike the previous Joseph in Genesis, the dreams were not based in symbolism, but were a direct instruction. There was no deciphering to take place, rather a sense of urgency. It is notable also that it should be the husband of Mary that is recipient of the dream instructions. At this point, not only has his fiancé given birth, but they are refugees fleeing from persecution also. Whilst Joseph has no biological connection to Christ, the fact that the dream instructions fall to him may be significant of his duty and, in keeping with the Jungian approach, his best optimised self. Put simply, God can be seen to use dreams in Matthew’s narrative to convey a sense of self on Joseph. In the lines that precede the first example, Joseph intends to separate from his betrothed in secret so as not to cause her public embarrassment. It is on the instruction of the angel that Joseph supports Mary and thus his role as stepfather deigned.

There exists one further example that is appropriate in the context of this thesis found in the Book of Numbers where God says:

‘When there is a prophet among you I, The Lord, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles’

(Numbers 12:6-8)

Two things are notable in this quote. Firstly that God will ‘speak to them in dreams’ and secondly that to Moses He will speak ‘clearly and not in riddles’ (ibid). Is the latter indicative of the fact that dreams are in requirement of such “de-riddling” and deciphering in order for us to receive the message? Earlier I commented that such dream interpretation was an example of our human need to reason and make sense, yet in this context it could mean so much more. If God really does speak in dreams and, as Jung argues, dreams are a means of accessing the unconscious mind, then it may be plausible to argue that God communicates through the unconscious, i.e – outside of our awareness. This could further support Jung’s notion of the ‘archetypes’, one of which pertains to religiosity (Jung 1979:43). Drawing on explorations from Chapter One, if we were to argue that God is indeed the basis of all creation (including the self), and that He communicates to us through the unconscious, then perhaps this ‘other within’ that Gannon referred to earlier, might in fact be her true self: the creator of which communicates through a mind that is not ‘coded and bounded’?(Gannon, 2004). Perhaps when we seek to create a self using our conscious mindset, we put aside the excitement of discovering this unbounded self that exists within us, ready to be “de-riddled” through the act of writing?

Dialogue with Practice: Pillar Two

Where *Pillar One* seeks to decipher the meaning of dream content, *Pillar Two* employs it as solely as a 'starting point', paying less attention to any hidden meaning (Russo, 2003). It does this in light of the definition of dream writing given by Richard Russo who also describes the approach as a means to creating 'a work of art' (ibid). In its form and structure it also explores the relationship between freedom and captivity. As Roland Barthes writes, freedom of writing is realised away from 'grammatical norms and stylistic constraints' and so *Pillar Two* sees a return to the unpunctuated style employed in chapter one (Barthes 1967:19-20). In doing so there is attention placed again on practitioner interpretation but moreover the unrestraint of absent punctuation explores the relationship between freedom and writing. When it comes to the binary of freedom/captivity, the latter is often tied up with the external: for example, one might not be free as they are held captive by a person/place/thing. What *Pillar Two* addresses is internal captivity or, as Susan Gannon describes it, 'the other within, the other that is not coded and bounded' (Gannon, 2004). The complexity here however is the realisation that any 'other within' is indeed 'bounded' by the dream state. In amalgamating Russo's understanding of dream material as initiating the writing along with Gannon's acknowledgment of a separate self within, *Pillar Two* could be understood as freeing that self from the bounded state. Crudely put, in treating the dream material as seedling, the resulting practice grows in an unrestricted manner. This then sees a return to Barthes' understanding of writing as 'trapped in a mere moment' (Barthes 1967:23). Whilst the act of writing frees of the potential locked in the dream material, the reality is that such writing is restricted physically by the box that surrounds it. Ironically, the freeing nature of the unpunctuated might also be understood as restrictive insofar as that it adheres to a stylistic pattern. The addition of sporadic punctuation promotes a sense of freedom in the text, particularly through any parts that refuse to adhere by its rules, for example questions not being followed by the required mark. The use of the term 'pillar' specifically lends itself to themes of construction and a thesis that explores identity as that which is discovered rather than created, having nothing sat atop the pillars develops a sense of the unfinished. There is more to do here: the building is not complete, nor has the appropriate punctuation been put in place. This leads to this particular piece seemingly a work-in-progress. Whilst this is highlighted further in the "A note on Stage Directions" box, it is important to contextualise how this sense of the incomplete resonates with the themes explored in the chapter thus far. Firstly, the journey of self discovery is an incomplete one and one of progression. Secondly, just as the pillared construction is without a roof, so the reader, performer and director must journey down into the foundations, away from the rooftop in order to gain a sense of what the finished construction may appear like. Of course the pillars, each having their own relationship with the dream-state, are themselves the holding up the undiscovered self as the chapter explores.

iii. The Waiting Game

One movement that lends itself to art and dreaming is surrealism. According to the *Dictionary of Philosophy*, surrealism ‘challenged established conventions [...] often in dreamlike flights of imagination’ (Mautner 2005:602). Adding that many of the movement’s contributors ‘came from Dada’, the neat summary ends by informing that ‘surrealism has also been interpreted as having an ethical message of personal liberation’ (ibid). It is notable that liberation is highlighted in this light.

Understandably, and as mentioned, freedom from ‘established conventions’ seems an attractive prospect, but the movement takes a deeper shift when such freedom is targeted on a ‘personal’ level (ibid). One name synonymous with the movement is that of Spanish artist Salvador Dali. Dali offers another form of dreamwork which differs to those already highlighted. His practice arguably concerns the fusing of the dream state and reality. Perhaps his seminal work ‘The Persistence of Memory’ (1931) gives a good example of this. In the piece Dali takes the mundane of everyday life in the form of a common time piece, but bends (quite literally) its form, causing a distortion that renders the watch both recognisable and unrecognisable, just like in the dream realm where we can often know where we are, yet it appears unfamiliar. The titles of his other works also lend themselves to the dysfunctional qualities of dreaming such as: *Lobster Telephone* (1936), *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans (Premonition of Civil War)* (1936) and *Apparition of Face and Fruit Dish on a Beach* (1938). There are also several works that amalgamate Dali’s surrealist approach with that of Christianity including: *Christ of Saint John of The Cross* (1951) and *Crucifixion (‘Corpus Hypercubus’)* (1954) in which Christ is depicted on a geometric style cross.

Where surrealists sought to explore the distorting reality of the mind, its close relative absurdism dealt with philosophical approaches to existential questions. I argue that the two are related since, as with surrealism, absurdism can be seen to challenge 'established conventions', particularly in performance practice, but also do so with emphasis on the 'personal' (ibid). One of the founding members of the movement, Albert Camus, is perhaps best known for his seminal work *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). Writing about the French philosopher, Thomas Mautner explains that at 'the centre of Camus's thought is the thesis that human existence is absurd' (Mautner 2005:94). Put simply, Camus relates life to the ancient Greek mythological story of Sisyphus, who was doomed to push a boulder up a large mountain everyday. On reaching the top, the boulder would roll all the way back down again. Walking back to the boulder, the job of Sisyphus the next day would be to do the process all over again and continue this pattern for all eternity. Camus uses this story in his book to highlight the pointless existence of life and how mankind seeks to create meaning for it. Originally published in 1942, at the heart of the Second World War, absurdist's such as Camus were arguably seeing existence as futile. In his aforementioned work he writes that the 'divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity' (Camus 1942:18). This sense of searching and the reality of a meaningless existence soon found its way into the Parisian theatres where the movement became fused with performance, delivering practice that remains culturally and academically significant today. One example of this is Samuel Beckett's *Waiting For Godot*. According to theorist Martin Esslin, the 'tragic farce, in which nothing happens' was originally 'scorned as undramatic' but 'became one of the greatest successes of the post-war theatre' (Esslin 2001:29). Like Camus before him, Beckett presents the possibility that life

and existence are futile and that perhaps contentment should come in being aware of this. In addition, there are significant areas of the play that wrestle with the theme of identity and what it is to be human in the here and now. Centring on two men, Vladimir and Estragon, waiting for the constantly imminent arrival of a figure named Mr Godot, the two contemplate how to spend their time waiting for his arrival. During their wait they are twice met by Pozzo and Lucky (his obedient dogsbody), once in each act, along with a young boy (apparently with messages from Mr Godot) towards the interval and the ending. Obscure in its setting and dialogue, the play identifies itself on the spectrum of absurdist theatre, dealing as it does with the futility (and often pointlessness) of life. Very early on in act one, Beckett introduces the theme of religion. Referring to the two thieves crucified with Christ, Vladimir remarks that 'one of the thieves was saved. [*Pause.*] It's a reasonable percentage' and later questions why that in four Gospels 'only one speaks of a thief being saved?' (Beckett 2006:3 and 5). It is notable that Beckett introduces the theme of faith early in the play which sees a sudden shift from Vladimir's optimistic chances of salvation to questioning whether the thief was actually saved seeing as the story is only mentioned in one Gospel. Arguably this might reflect the sometime familiar cycle of living in hopeful anticipation, only to question the core facts we have hope in. It is also significant that Beckett should open his piece with the subject of religiosity as it is perhaps a comment that religion is often the first option when it comes to making sense of life. Arguably in Beckett's own life, born to Anglican Irish parents (ironically on the Good Friday of 1906) religion would have featured early on and so there are perhaps parallels that life and purpose are often first deciphered as a religious endeavour. As act one develops Estragon questions whether or not the two of them are tied to Godot. Vladimir responds positively with 'Tied to Godot? What an idea! No question

of it' (Beckett 2006:13). For Vladimir there is a sense of connectivity between himself and Godot. Godot at this point, appears to be someone Vladimir thinks is worth waiting for. It also evokes a sense of connectivity explored in Chapter One. If we are to take the character of Godot to resemble God (ever present in the piece yet unseen), then what Vladimir identifies here is an intimate relationship with this unseen figure. The two are somehow 'tied' to one another in a way that sustains Vladimir's motivation for continuing to wait (ibid). Immediately after this exchange, Estragon asks 'His name is Godot? To which Vladimir response with 'I think so' (ibid). Names and identity are intrinsically linked and allow for us a sense of self and so it is interesting that Vladimir should be uncertain of Godot's name since he feels so tied to him. This might also be significant of the uncertainty of his own identity. As this thesis explores the idea of a discovered self, it is apt that neither Vladimir or Estragon refers to one another by their names. Rather, Vladimir is called 'Didi' whilst Estragon is called 'Gogo'. This is significant to my argument. In one sense as author, Beckett himself could be understood to be a God like figure, creating and designing a world and people as he chooses. As part of this Beckett gives his characters identities, part of which are their given names. In the world of the play however, the characters omit referring to each other by their given identities and instead replace them with alternatives. Perhaps one interpretation might be that of affectionate nickname, but the practice of shifting away from an innate identity to one of the world's own choosing acts as a concise simile for the overarching viewpoint of this thesis.

The arrival of Pozzo and Lucky in act one marks a shift in the two protagonists' boredom of waiting for Godot. According to Esslin, 'Pozzo and Lucky represent the relationship between body and mind, the material and spiritual sides of

man, with the intellect subordinate to the appetite of the body' (Esslin 2001:48).

Lucky, who with a rope around his neck accepts the orders of a demanding Pozzo, is ironically named. On being approached by Estragon to wipe a tear from his eye, Lucky lashes out and kicks Estragon in the shins before returning to his accustomed stance of subserviently holding Pozzo's basket and bag. 'He's stopped crying' Pozzo remarks about Lucky, 'you have replaced him' he aims at Estragon (Beckett 2006:25). 'For each one who begins to weep, somewhere else another stops' Pozzo says, adding 'the same is true of the laugh' (ibid). The extremities of weeping and laughter are placed together here, adding to the sense of the absurdity of emotions one experiences. 'Let us not speak ill of our generation, it is not any unhappier than its predecessors. [*Pause.*] Let us not speak well of it either. [*Pause.*] Let us not speak of it at all.' Informs Pozzo (ibid). Perhaps indicative of the influence of Camus' thinking, Pozzo describes a sense of simply carrying on in the moment. Not looking to the those who have gone before either positively or negatively, but (almost ignorantly) simply carrying on with the here and now. There are similarities here between Pozzo's lines and Esslin's understanding of body and mind alluded to earlier. Taking his observation, Pozzo seems to support Esslin's approach that the character is consumed by the moment, thinking only of his current appetite – further supported by the chicken he enjoys before the hungry men. The climax of this section sees Lucky, who up until now has remained silent, put on his (thinking) hat, and begin to ruminate and what he says lends itself to the realm of the dream state. He speaks in a flow of recognisable language and yet there is not coherent sense in what he is saying. Phrases such as 'Given the existence' and 'for reasons unknown' are immediately followed by 'as uttered forth in the public works' and 'but time will tell are plunged in torment' respectively echo a surreal dialogue where, like dreaming,

patches seem to fuse together and make sense before melting into a different topic all together (Beckett 2006:36). In an almost Freudian exercise of free association, Lucky spills the contents of his mind that have seemingly been locked away through his subservience to Pozzo. On realising the threat of Lucky's freedom to think, Pozzo quickly demands his hat be removed. Vladimir does so and stamps on it, to which Pozzo remarks 'There's an end to his thinking' (Beckett 2006:38). This is a significant moment. To be able to think and reason is to be human. By stripping away this ability Pozzo is, in effect, removing Lucky's capacity to be human. If, as Esslin suggests, this is significant of the 'intellect subordinate to the appetite of the body' there is the paradoxical realisation that the innate needs (appetites) of the human condition are the very things that stop it realising its own humanity. Put simply, humanity denies itself the chance to contemplate the reality of its existence. Arguably Camus might argue that this is due to the fact that existence is pointless and so to carry out with our instinctual needs and urges is to distract ourselves from this reality. The theme of distraction is continued shortly after Pozzo and Lucky depart when Vladimir remarks 'That passed the time' (Beckett 2006:41), 'It would have passed in any case' replies Estragon, to which Vladimir observes 'Yes, but not so rapidly' (ibid). Shortly after sees the arrival of the young boy and it is at this point that one can observe the play through a religious lens once more. The boy greets Vladimir by asking him 'Mister Albert...?', to which Vladimir replies 'Yes' (Beckett 2006:42). By this exchange, Vladimir is in possession of three identities: Vladimir, Didi and Albert. Immediately there are links to the significance of the number three. One is reminded of Catholic doctrine on the Holy Trinity and God consisting of three elements to make one: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The boy, it transpires is a messenger from Godot charged with delivering news to the men and again there are

parallels with the notion of Christ being sent to deliver news given by His Father to the people. When questioned, the boy tells Vladimir that he ‘minds the goats’ whilst his brother ‘minds the sheep’ (Beckett 2006:44). Sheep and goats are a symbol used throughout the Bible and in particular the New Testament. In an example of the intertextual at work, St Matthew’s Gospel describes Jesus teaching about those who will inherit what His Father promises and those who will not. Matthew writes that when the time of judgement comes, all ‘the nations will be gathered before God’s throne and separated ‘as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats’ putting ‘the sheep on His right and the goats on His left’ (Matthew 25:32-34). The teaching continues to inform that the sheep will inherit The Father’s Kingdom, but the goats will not. This allows for two readings of this particular part of Beckett’s play. Firstly if the boy, like Jesus, is sent to call sinners (and using the current analogy, covert the goats into sheep) there may be some hope for Vladimir that salvation is still an option. Secondly however, it provides the possibility that the separation has indeed already occurred and Vladimir is forever to be regarded as one of the goats. Interestingly, as the climax of act one, we see a return to the religiosity observed at the beginning of the piece, with particular attention paid to Vladimir’s observation of 50/50 being ‘a reasonable percentage’ and an equal chance of salvation or damnation (Beckett 2006:3)³.

It is not until the very end of the play that the boy makes another appearance. Shortly before, Vladimir contemplates the day: ‘Was I sleeping, while the others suffered? Am I sleeping now? Tomorrow, when I wake, or think I do, what shall I say of today?’ (Beckett 2006:83). In a signal back to Russo, Vladimir’s dialogue reflects

³ In an additional nod to intertextuality, the remark concerning the two thieves (‘one was saved’) comes from the writing of St Augustine (See Esslin, 2001)

the notion that the conscious state and dream state might be actually be two points on the same path, with Vladimir being unable to distinguish between the two. In a twist during the boy's return, it is Vladimir who, like the act of praying, sends a message away with the boy to tell Godot: 'tell him you saw me and that... [He hesitates] ... that you saw me', before becoming frantic with worry that the boy will not have seen him (Beckett 2006:85). It is perhaps a last bid attempt to establish an existence, and therefore identity, for himself before giving up all hope. Rather than end on a note of desperation, Beckett allows for slapstick humour in the falling down of Estragon's trousers, due to the fact he removed his belt so the two men could hang themselves. 'Pull on your trousers' demands Vladimir, to which Estragon responds 'You want me to pull off my trousers?' (Beckett 2006:87). 'Pull ON your trousers' Vladimir insists, before the two of them agree to go, but neither moving as the curtain descends (ibid). In a simile of the absurdist's view of the futility of life, Beckett's play ends on extremities; suicide to humour, motivation to stillness.

Dialogue with Practice: Pillar Three

Pillar Three sees siblings Charlie and Sarah, dealing with the aftermath of the death of their mother. A symbol of their common origin, their mother's demise due to dementia punctuates the scenes which show a fractious but loving relationship between the brother and sister. Toying with the shifting of identity, the piece alternates between the present-day conversations between the two and Sarah's memories of having to look after their mother. The piece also seeks to present dreaming in an alternative light, that of escapism: 'Imagine, going to sleep hating an enemy. Waking up hating an enemy. You'd only have the bit in between as time off.' . The escapism of the dream echoes the escapism yearned for by Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting For Godot*. Just as the two men seek to pass the time, so too do the characters in *Pillar Three* engage in the mundane to fill their time (sat in the darkness/fishing/sitting in silence). As previously mentioned the (unnamed) mother acts as a shared origin between the siblings, yet on learning that their father 'didn't fancy' their mother any more, this grounding is presented as being separated and torn apart . If we are to understand the character of Godot to represent God, then similarly Vladimir finds himself separated from his origin, supported also by his angst in wanting Godot to know that he was seen by the boy. This idea of separation is also highlighted in the illness of the mother who seemingly appears separated from herself. Throughout the piece there are contradictions between what Sarah thinks her mother likes and what her mother says she likes with pages two and six for example referring to eggs and Classic FM respectively. Our preferences go a great way in forming our identity. By Sarah telling her mother what she likes and her mother disagreeing, the mother can be seen to clutch on to her (ailing) identity by taking ownership of what she prefers. For example in Beckett's play where Pozzo 'puts an end to [Lucky's] thinking', he is in fact stripping him of his capacity to be human (to think/reason) and therefore express himself (Beckett 2006:38). By holding on to the ability to express herself, the mother in *Pillar Three* is in reality holding on to her human identity. To be told we like something when we know we do not, is to have our identity placed upon us from the external. By keeping the dementia suffering mother unnamed, her identity remains clouded. As recipients understanding her illness, we are more inclined to pick up clues to her identity from the daughter who nurses her. In this way our understanding of the mother's identity is provided by someone who is not actually her.

Pillar Three somewhat distances itself from its two predecessors. Engaging particularly with Beckett's play, the piece moves away from explorations of the dream world and investigates identity in relation to memory and typography. Again separated by typeface, the three performer piece contributes to the continuing significance of the triune and also establishes a visual identity for itself. The mother's dialogue for instance, is always presented centrally in the column, whilst Sarah's and Charlie's sits left and right respectively. In this way their mother acts as both origin and middle ground, despite the fact that her own identity is crumbling away.

A note on Stage Directions

The practice of this section is to be treated in one of two ways. Firstly, as one complete entity comprising of three separate scenes, one performer for *Pillar One*, a second separate performer for *Pillar Two* and three separate performers for *Pillar Three*. The alternate is to approach the three pieces as three separate entities. It is up to the director's discretion as to which would best suit. One thing that must remain across both approaches however is the exploration between freedom and captivity. The pillars are specifically designed to be trapped on the page. They cannot communicate with one another, nor can they know of the others' existence. Much like the dream-state they are only free to roam in the space of their own confinement. To that end, the free-flowing nature of *Pillar Two*, its lack of punctuation and grammar, must remain. Unlike the performance pieces of Chapter One, here the lack of order and grammatical style is not at the disposal of the director or performer but a clear journey of free association. That being said, again there is no specific temporality or location in which the action takes place. Should the director's choice favour the approach of treating the pieces as separate entities, there is again no limit of the number of performers who can engage. Particular emphasis (across both approaches) should be placed on the final line of each pillar: 'It has always been just me'. In this way, the pieces that are restricted to their boxes can, in some small way, show that they are connected in their feeling of isolation.

Practice

Spiralling to the centre and caught in the flinching stillness of the rushing wind. A field full. Ten thousand faces stare and bend as I approach, each crowned with the petals of a golden ratio. Sunflowers. It is never ending. Hidden in the rows is a face I recognise. I can't place him. Or her. They smile and wave but I'm too weary, unsure as to whether I should wave back. Might this be a trap? Was it not Salome that seduced Herod with dancing bend of her body at the price of the head of a Saint and cousin? Should I return friendly fire or turn the other cheek?

I walk on. I'm sorry. Perhaps I'll never know if I should have stayed that day. The sadness of this realm is never being able to return. The joy of this realm is never being able to return. I'm inside. It's dark. I'm home and yet I'm nowhere near. Mum is coming back. The house is a mess. I'm panicking. It doesn't seem fair. I moved out years ago. I shouldn't be here. I need to tidy. I have to, what's the point otherwise. It's not even my mess and yet I know just who will get the blame. The house is gone. It makes perfect sense for it to go. I'm at Church. Have I always been here? Maybe the house was a metaphor. Is Church my house?

I wonder how many stars there are in the sky how many galaxies in the universe how many universes in the question mark the unknown the far away place the twinkle in a heart why must night come black its ink leaking over the innocent canvas will night always be bad if the ink covers the satin why not the satin clothing the ink there is a fine line between the satin and the stain and pleasure and the pain the verse and the refrain I wonder how hot the stars are is there any way to tell how can the stars be as hot as they say and the depth of space as cold as I have been I would hate to travel to space its empty nothingness a vacuum a void to avoid I would love to go interstellar be the adventurer the charter of the uncharted a map an almanac people would look at me and know they would see me as the star whisper decipherer of a language galactical who can tell me I am anchored when I am floating who can tether me when I have been handed golden shears there is a world outside of this world one where I belong one where I am a stranger there is a force within me pulled from a force without I am going falling floating seeping sinking flying down right down to the top the top of a mountain where no flags have been planted no footprints no small step or giant leap man or mankind woman and womankind it is a kingship a kinship it is a womb a safehouse a blackout a blinding light a place for torches and fire and water a cleansing a releasing a waiting and waiting for what for who for now form then for ever there is no backup it is now or never or maybe forever I am going but I will wait and I will see you in the stars

Who are you talking to?
No one!

Yes you were, who were you talking to?
Just myself!

Yourself?
Yes – my self.

That's what weirdos do.
I'm not a weirdo

Then why are you sat in the dark talking to yourself?
You're the weirdo!

Ha! How am I?
Watching me!

No...
Yes! Weirdos watch people without them knowing.

I could hear you downstairs.
So?

So, I came to see who you were talking to.
Well now you know can you please leave?

Why were you in the dark?
Just leave please!

I'm worried about you.
Why?

Because it's not normal!
What isn't?

This. All this. Sat upstairs. On your own. In the dark. Talking to yourself.
Well what does it matter to you anyway?

Charlie!..
Well what does it? I don't know why you're pretending to care.

I promised Mum that if...
Oh don't start all that.

All what?
Bringing Mum into it!

I'm not, I'm just saying that I promised I would look after you.
Well you haven't done a very good job have you!? Turn the light out please.

The House of God for which there is a place reserved for me? Is this where I make my home. Who can dwell in the house of The Lord? There is room indeed for all. I'm behind the Altar. The table of The Sacrifice. I've never done this before. I am not hosting. I am merely a vehicle. The host requires but One Host. The head of the table. The maker of rules. He is the feast and banquet. How have I come to stand here as His ambassador? Where are the golden sunflowers now? Who was the figure waving? Perhaps it was a goodbye and not a moment to reminisce. Time stands still here and yet I can feel the pressure of needing to rush. There is no clock, no calendar, no minute too soon nor eleventh hour. There is no day of the week, nor month, nor year. Time is simply always now. Intangible but now. There is blurring and clear vision. Colours and unbearable darkness. Tears of fear and cries of joy. The detail is exquisite. The Chalice looks to be Italian. It is a faded, dull gold revealing a silver foundation layer. The notch in the stem punctured with a twisted pattern. I can feel the weight. It all seems so real and yet I know it is far from reality. I know I am away from myself. Within myself.

I sometimes feel like I am drowning do you ever feel like that I know I am not drowning really and yet I really think I am I wish I could breathe underwater do you wish you could breathe underwater if we could breathe underwater there would be no drowning can you imagine that a world where there is no water and no drowning it does not make sense it is perfectly normal to be submersed to drown and yet to fill your lungs with air my lungs with air our lungs with air I suppose drowning is a bit like flying can you imagine that a world where you drown and fly and fly and drown all from the comfort of paralysis not moving a muscle stuck heavy anchored like a stone not a stone a boulder no bigger a mountain stuck there like a mountain too heavy to lift yourself and yet you are flying and you are drowning you are stuck and paralysed and flying and drowning it does not make sense must it make sense I think we must be content if the distortion there is no sense no order not even a sense of order it is forwards and down and backwards and up stationary and left and moving and right its three dimensional and tangible and unimaginable it makes me laugh and cry and hope and dream ah yes it makes me dream it is as poignant and sad as it is happy and bad and yet I am happy to be drowning alone just me and water and words and pictures suspended in nowhere in nothingness in everything and everyone I do not question I only accept I accept what I cannot change and I change what I cannot accept I am author and subject and genre and plot I am major storyline and minor detail come to think of it now there is no water

Sarah!
Mum?
Sarah!
What's wrong Mum?
Don't leave me.
I'm not going anywhere.
You left me.
I went to get your pills.
It was horrible.
You've just had a bad dream.
A nightmare.
Yes. A nightmare.
I dreamt I was still alive.
Don't talk like that.
Well it's true. What life is this?
You've a wonderful life.
Which is more than can be said for you.
I love my life.
Don't tell your lies!
I do!
How can you love a life looking after me?
You're my Mum. I'll always look after you.
There you go again, lying.
Now take these.
I don't want them.
The doctor said you have to.
What does he know?
A lot more than us, now take them.
He can shove 'em.
I'll only hide them in your breakfast again.
Fine! There.
Good. Now what do you want to eat?
Nothing.
Mum!
I'm on hunger strike.
I'm doing eggs.
Hate them.
No you don't, you like eggs.
Don't you tell me what I like. I'll start not liking you if you're not careful.

There is no one here but me. Am I going mad? We think what we dream and we dream what we think. I am gone again.

It is as if this were a mirror world. A place of reflection. The place to reflect. Yet it reflects not a world I recognise but one I instinctively know. There are faces here that don't belong. I don't belong. The question is, am I trapped or can I go free? Who chooses when this draws to a close? A dream of life. A life of dreams. Sunflowers. Always sunflowers. Seeds upon seeds. Swirls upon swirls. Tiny and tall. Mighty but small. They meet at a point. I can see no point. How can they be so bright but smell of nothing? Where is the sense of smell? How can anything seem so real without the touches of reality? There is no narrative. No beginning or middle. There will always be an end.

Now there's a girl. I know her. Laura. I haven't seen her for a long time. I can hear her voice. I can see her clothes. The clothes she would wear. She's still plump. She's still funny. Now though, there is an affection in her voice. She is concerned. Don't go she pleads. Don't go away. I know she is speaking with a religious tongue.

I once met a girl you know well strictly speaking you do not know her at least I do not think you know her but then again I am not the one who lives in your head you are the one who lives in your head I mean you are you head or rather you head is you either way I met a girl there that you may or may not know mind you I say met we did not actually communicate well not with words anyway no rather with our looks sometimes you see looks can speak more than words can ever say looking is a universal language try it no seriously go on try it now look at me no not that bit look at me look me square in the eyes of course one cannot look at both eyes simultaneously it is simply impossible but choose an eye and fix your gaze on it there you see not impossible but actually very possible two eyes well four eye meeting not a word said and yet so much communicated even just doing so we discovered that there is such a thing as making the impossible possible a life revelation and yet not a word was uttered powerful stuff I tell you now where was I ah yes this girl who you may or may not know and may or may have not been able to speak there we were locked in a gaze poor thing awful straggly hair poor wretch had not been near a bar of soap for some time little bit of sick on her chin cannot be helped bodily fluid and all that jumper yeas she wore a jumper I imagine it may have been white at some point ribbed thing nice pattern second hand ah I did feel sorry for her yet in her eyes she resented me she resented my gazing and my pity shame really why are you still looking at me you know it is rude to stare look at me when I talk to you and stop blinking

Sarah?
What
I just...
Just what?
Just came to say sorry.
Good.
For shouting at you.
Thank you.
And you do look after me.
Mum would be proud.
Thank you. I think so too.
Well, bye then.
Charlie!
Yeah?
I'm sorry too.
It's okay.
You're not a weirdo.
I know.
What do you want to do tomorrow?
Tomorrow?
Yeah, what do you fancy doing?
Oh, well, I don't know.
Do you want to go fishing?
Fishing?
Yeah, you know, by a river somewhere. Just the two of us.
Not really.
Oh. Why not?
It's cruel.
How?
Letting the fish swallow that hook thing. Thinking it's food. It's a trap.
We'll put them back.
It's not the point. They've already been hurt.
They're just fish.
Sarah, I don't want to go fishing!
Okay. We won't.
We could have a picnic though I guess.
A picnic?
Yeah, by the river. It's less cruel.
What sandwiches do you want?
Tuna please.

She has always loved me. I have always suspected it. Now, finally the truth is out. She hugs me. I kiss her. She kisses me again. Now I'm scared. I can feel a dilemma brewing. Everything is organised. I'm going before long. The tickets, the room, the people. Everything is set in stone. What in life really is though? Maybe indeed I should stay. Perhaps she is my ladder. This is my chance. I've had everything wrong all along. Is anything set in stone? Today's headlines, old news. I'm in her garden. Her friends are here. They are happy for us. They've always known. Her Mum is happy. Her Dad approves. I'm free to change my mind. From freedom to captivity. I'm claustrophobic. What have I done? What will they think? There's a car here. I need to decide. I'm scared. Sunflowers. Always sunflowers.

I open my eyes

I'm at English Martyrs Church. It's unfamiliar yet I recognise where I am. Two coffins lay in the aisle, one atop the other. The box on top is smaller than the one it triumphs. An old man lays inside. "What will this man leave behind?" Fr Mark bellows from the lectern, "What will this man leave behind?"

I suppose it is one big race really all this life and death and that bit in the middle the bookends seem self explanatory start here finish here listen in the middle or speak in the middle or learn in the middle perhaps live in the middle the whole things seems out of balance really one and three in the same breath beginning middle and end life is not a story though well not until you are gone and then you are a story an imagined plot not really exciting though when you know the end there is always that someone will to ruin it for you spoil the ending punch you while you stretch poke you while you yawn why do people do that I hate being interrupted what gives anyone the right do not shake me or shout my name this is secret this is personal I am in a world of my own I am away with the fairies I am out for the count I am knocked unconscious the world keeps on spinning they will tell me and I tell the my world will spin to and it will spin for as long as thrash it until the last inch of energy leaves the top of my mind the tip of my finger and the touch of that world how dare I how dare you better still I dare I dare you to too to the yawners the pokers the stretchers the punchers I dare you all I will run faster jump higher shout louder dig deeper there is no stopping me I am on my way to infinity there is no ending from here an endless growing of a timeless clockface the vast eternity encased in bones I hear a tapping on the glass a pencil HB maybe 4B no rubber a pointed tip it clanks against the glass timer urging the sand to drop every last grain must be counted for as when the sphere falls we are turned on our heads and the countdown begins again

He'll be the death of me.
Who will?
You know who.
Charlie?
It's Charles thank you. As in the Prince.
You named him after Prince Charles?
No. I named him after my Grandfather.
What was his name?
Is that a joke?
Yes
Well don't joke.
Sorry. Just trying to lighten the mood.
Well don't try to lighten the mood. The mood is considerably un-light. It's dark. It's heavy.
What's so bad about Charlie anyway? Sorry, 'Charles'!?
He's not right.
What?
In the head. He's somewhere else. Another planet. His own world.
He's a child. All children live in their own world.
Yes but at least they have one foot on planet earth. God only knows where his feet are.
He just has a strong imagination.
Wild imagination you mean!
At least he is content to be on his own.
On his own?! I should doubt it.
He's always on his own.
Do you think he's the only one living in that head of his? There's more than him I can tell you. There's a group. A colony no doubt.
We're not all like you.
I beg your pardon!?

Silence. The uncertainty of audience participation. Do I speak? Should you speak? Will the man speak for himself? "Chris" comes the bellow once more from the front, "Chris, what will this man leave behind?". A thousand eyes from a thousand benches turn towards me. Do I speak? Should you speak? Will the man speak for himself? "A brother" I respond. A brother? Does he have a brother? Do I know the man? His family turn round. They've been sat ahead of me all this time. "Thank you" they murmur in unison. I meant it as a joke. No one laughed. They never laugh. "What will this man leave behind Chris?". Think. Staggered. Stand. Sit. Think. "A family?". Should I have spoken? 'No! What this man leaves behind is his spirit. His body is the shell, the life of this man lives on". I feel stupid. I look stupid. I shouldn't have spoken. I knew I'd be wrong. I'm always wrong. They never laugh. The pipes, always the pipes. It's time for Mass. It's my time. Redemption. I can make amends. I walk up the aisle, water and wine in hand. The former rests in a silver bowl, a tiny spoon its accompaniment. Stir it, I think. I must stir the water. I can't, I shouldn't, I want to, I do.

I sometimes see the lottery numbers my phone is full of them go on check the notes they are all in there once I was on a train only a two carriage thing not sure why I even caught it it did not much matter though as soon enough I was behind the wheel just like that in the blink of an eye you just accept it I guess anyway I went from train to car to Broxbourne never heard of it never been and yet there it was in front of me clear as day welcome to Broxbourne please keep Broxbourne tidy Broxbourne welcomes careful drivers well of course this was a sign right literally and divinely this was a hint at the lottery numbers I cracked the code B was 2 R was 18 O was 15 X was 24 B was 2 again O was 15 again U was 21 R was 18 again N was 19 and E was 5 of course this posed a dilemma as I only needed six numbers for the lottery but not much gets passed me so I took away the duplicates which left me with 2 18 15 24 21 19 and 5 but you are right this meant one number too many as the sum of the number 15 was one plus five which equalled six and six was the number of lottery balls I needed I opted to get rid of 15 this meant that my winning numbers in ascending order were 2 5 18 19 21 and 24 it was amazing that satisfaction like I had cracked the code I was Alan Turing and so it is on the list now it can boast its own space on the ladder I remember hearing the story about a man who prayed to win the lottery every night he would say to God please let me win the lottery but of course he died and never won so when he went to heaven he said to God why did I not win the lottery and God told him that he should have bought a ticket

Have you ever had a boyfriend?

Of course.

I've never seen one.

Why would I let them meet you?

Do you have a boyfriend now?

No.

Why not?

Dumped him.

Really?

Yeah!

Did he dump you?

No!!

Can I have a boyfriend?

If you want.

What, even though I'm a boy?

Yeah.

Don't boys marry girls?

Who's talking about marriage?

I hate girls.

Why?

Because they're mean.

Do you think I'm mean?

Sometimes.

All the time?

No, just sometimes.

Good.

How dya get a boyfriend?

They have to fancy you.

How dya know if they fancy you?

You don't.

Then how dya get a boyfriend?

You have to ask if they fancy you.

Oh. What if they don't?

Then you tell them you were joking.

Does anybody fancy me?

I doubt it.

Oh. That's okay. Did Mum have a boyfriend?

No.

What about Dad?

No. He didn't fancy her any more.

I lift the spoon upright. It won't move. There's salt. Salt, in the bowl. It shouldn't be there. Salt water, bitter tears. Funeral. Macabre. Force it, I think. Dissolve it. No one will know. Why me? I've done it wrong again. They never laugh. I walk away. Coffin number two opens its lid. A lady's hand falls out. There's varnish on. Peach coloured nail varnish. It looks young. I know this hand. I've seen this hand. It's pale. I look up. Flowers. Lilies. Sunflowers. Always sunflowers. "Tea?" I'm sorry? "Do you want tea?". It's Fr Mark again. I don't want one. I never want one. "Yes please" I reply. He goes. Never comes back. I wait. I know. I still wait.

They never laugh. Sunflowers. Always sunflowers. The minor details turn into the major flaws. There is beauty in these visions. Do I create them? How can I create that which has not happened? How can I reminisce in a world I've never been born in? Where am I in this? Who am I in this? I have a duty. A language to decipher. Who can translate? Nobody but me. My dreams are my own. No one dare touch the touchable. They are not solid. They are liquid. Rainbow liquid. I'm pouring and pouring. It's spills over

I remember when I did not believe in time travel foolish really quite embarrassing looking back now mind we all have our regrets sometimes I regret though no much but if it is a particularly dark episode of course one cannot choose one must only enjoy or endure the choice is yours this is not a cinema it is game people pay a lot of money for this sort of thing you know I could tell you some shocking things things you simply would not imagine things that you never thought I could think but again it is enjoy or endure there is no changing channel this box has a mind of its own it can get quite sordid you know oh yes I did not come down with the last shower I can tell you I have seen men and women and men with women and men with men and women with women I sat and watched an enjoyed and endured I have heard screams and shrieks and my name called out I have been caught and captured and escaped and unscathed I have touched minds and hearts tasted sweat felt skin upon skin I slip and I slide and the world has no idea not a whiff of it in the air that only an hour ago that my heart was beating to a different rhythm was pounding against the backdrop of red chiffon you see that is the magic of this other realm it is pot luck it is a gamble it is the winding back of a clock I am young again I am without age for age is a process without and eternity a process within sometimes there is no stopping I try with every inch of me I call out my own name your name any name why not it is only me that can hear it until then I sink back I am oozing deeper I am sucked into the sheets of blank paper

Turn the news off.
I thought you liked it in the background.
I can't stand the bombing.
It's the noise.
I can turn it down.
Just get rid of it.
Ok.
Peace in our time.
You what?
It's what you grandfather used to say when it all fell silent – peace in our time.
I'll remember that.
It's hard to think about those men firing metal at each other.
Yeah.
It must be horrid.
Of course.
No, I mean, being consumed by so much hate.
Oh.
Imagine, going to sleep hating an enemy. Waking up hating an enemy. You'd only have the bit in between as time off.
I suppose.
Do you hate me?
Mum!
Well, do you?
Of course I don't. I love you.
Well I hate you.
No you don't.
I do. I hate you. And him.
And all of them.
Let's put the radio on.
I hate the radio.
It's Classic FM, your favourite.
I hate Classic FM.
You don't hate Mum.
You're incapable of hating.
I can do anything.
Then do what you love and not what you hate.
Fuck off.
Shhh... Close your eyes.

the page. Continual flowing. There are no rules. There is no punishment. Just colour. Always colour. No map to follow, no path to walk. I am free to wander. To explore. To conquer. I shall lay my flag here. Claim this foreign land that is already my own. I don't need to read. I must write. I have the pen. The paint. The paper. Always colour. Imagine, a world in my imagination. Is there no end to the adventure, the torment, the hope? It is my duty not to decipher, only to wait. Wait for what? Who knows? One day I will find out. I shall cross that threshold that divides me from this other self. A self that deals in the obscure, the fused, the blurred, the colour. Always colour. Who is to say this other me remains trapped? I see him there. Looking at me. He's always happy to see me. There is no remorse. This is not a realm for sadness. Only happy things happen here. Happy and terrifying. I live in a world of extremes. There is no middle ground. I am right and left, black and white, within and without. I know now who waves from the sunflowers. Always sunflowers. Always waving. The figure in the distance is me. It has always been just me.

I always think it so abrupt at the end there is no denouement no resolution just as we are ordered in so we are ordered out again what is this obsession with understanding I simply do not understand it this preoccupation a meaning making who why how where when perhaps the meaning comes in the act itself why should it mean anything at all it is what it is a collage a fragment a splinter call it what you will my time for secrets is over I tell myself everyday I will not let it happen again and yet here I am oh I can really annoy myself sometimes still no use getting worked up I shall just watch and wait and wait and watch it is a wonder really a wonder which one wonders will ever be available to watch again just imagine on demand imagination it is simply unimaginable yet the I in the imagination is the seed of this beanstalk magic beans that lead Jack to world of golden eggs and castles in the sky the magic that changes pumpkins into carriages and paupers into princes this is no fairytale land no other Eden no uneasy head on which lies a crown this is the uncharted the unseen and unimagined it is played out spools and reels and files and folders encrypted and decrypted restrained and unbound it is silhouettes that step into light it is drawings and etchings forever rubbed out is it my handwriting I see when I read this open book to whom does think ink belong I may hold the pen for now but my paper is not my own is this my chance to sign it one stroke of the pen and everything will change for as long as forever lasts in my mind this is the start of something new a replaying of a familiar story I am reading my self it has always been just me

Will we always be together?
Of course we will.
What about Mum?
She is with us too.
Where?
Everywhere.
I don't like the dark.
What?
I don't like the dark.
Oh.
That's why I was sitting in it.
Because you don't like it?
I wanted to make myself brave.
Oh Charlie, you are brave.
No I'm not. I'm scared.
I'm always scared.
What have you got to be afraid of? I'll look after you.
I don't like not knowing.
Not knowing what?
Anything. And that is what the dark is right? It is not knowing anything: what's in front of you, behind you, who's there.
Nobody can know everything though.
I know. I just wanted to be less scared.
Do you know what Mum used to say?
What?
Peace in our time.
Eh?
When there was silence, and stillness she would say
Peace in our time.
You see the dark can't hurt you. It can't touch you. It's just a thing, so whenever you feel scared just think
Peace in our time.
Will we always be together?
Of course we will.
Peace. It has always been just me.

Chapter Three

Having addressed notions of self-discovery via the unobservable mind in relation to the other and as an observable entity from afar, it is important to acknowledge the relationship one faces between being both together and apart. By this I mean the balance between being the individual and part of the collective simultaneously. In this thesis which presupposes understanding the self to come from discovery over creation, both processes (I would argue) support the outcome of a person set apart, identifiable by knowing who they are not. According to the Oxford English Dictionary the term 'individual' is that which forms 'an indivisible entity' (OED, 2019).

Understood in relation to the balance between self and other, collective and apart, the term could be approached from another angle. If, as the dictionary details, individuality is the base matter, the prime number almost, then the collective is surely made up of 'indivisible' entities, which together (somewhat ironically) form a larger identity. Put another way we are, as individuals, building blocks to a greater collective and it is a possibility that by virtue of being different (individual, set apart) we take up a space in the collective that no other can fill. I would go on to add here that, as a primal prerogative of humanity, the idea of being both separate and apart, might go some way to supporting our sense of survival: the philosophical identity of "I am my own self as I am different" paired with safety of being hidden within a larger collective. This combination is particularly apparent with regards to audience, both in a performance setting and a religious one.

i. Audience

Writing in *Postdramatic Theatre and the Political: International Perspectives on Contemporary Performance*, Michael Wood writes that performance 'relies on [...]

eliciting a response from its audience' (Jürs-Mundy 2013:256). Whilst for context here, Wood is referring specifically to the theatre of Heiner Müller, I would argue that his description is true of most if not all performance. Wood also delves deeper into the mechanics behind Müller's practice, detailing that the 'role of the recipient is to actively harness the potential encoded within the performance' and that the 'audience's movement is not guided by a consensus of interpretation among the collective [...] but is coloured by the possibility for an emergence of a collective punctuated by difference and individuality' (ibid). This understanding of audience as a 'collective punctuated by difference and individuality' parallels the approach to a separate and collective self highlighted at the beginning of this chapter (ibid). There is a sense of excitement and hope almost in Wood's description of a 'possibility for an emergence': the thrill of the unknown which theatre can stimulate amongst its recipients (ibid). Similarly with congregations at the Catholic Mass, each individual is encouraged to experience the celebration on a very individual level (particularly in parts of silent prayer where participants often seek to bring their own personal worries and anxieties before The Lord), whilst through hymns and communal call/response elements, also permeate into the collective. As Wood neatly puts it, 'the very possibility for individual experience is predicated by the individual spectator's belonging to a collective' (ibid). This understanding can be seen in the writings of St Paul, particularly in his letter to the Corinthians. St Paul argues that 'Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ', adding that 'if the foot should say "because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body", it would not for that reason stop being part of the body' (1 Corinthians 12:12-15). Again here we see the celebration of the individual in relation to both its difference from the other and its place with them also.

Continuing with the theme of audience, I shall now highlight an aspect that fits both in the role of the Mass and in performance participation: sacrifice. The theme of sacrifice is one which spans numerous religions across the world and is key here also in this analysis of theatre and self-discovery. In my own experience of vocation to the priesthood, one might describe the exploration as a response to an invitation. Through discernment and time engaging in theological study, the hope is that one becomes more attuned as to whether he is suitable for the role, is so called to do and moreover a greater understanding of his identity. The opportunity of course comes not only in responding “yes” to that invitation, but also an element of sacrifice, particularly in regards to the way of life one has become accustomed to. In this example, sacrifice is met with opportunity. I would add that the same could be argued for audience participation in performance. For the purpose of this chapter I separate the collective participation from the individual physical engagement of participation. In the former, with pantomime for example, one has the safety of remaining hidden in the collective, whilst what I shall address here is performance that requires the individual recipient to step out and abandon their role as spectator and adopt the new position of spectator/performer. Writing in *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation*, Gareth White offers a detailed view of audience participation that could be seen to correlate with notions of sacrifice and as he terms it, ‘self-understanding’ (White 2013:184). Addressing participation as that of a response to an invitation, White writes that to accept ‘means accepting an altered social role’ and that it ‘also means accepting some risk to social esteem’ (White 2013:159). What is interesting here is that White acknowledges the social aspect in his commentary on participation. One does not simply abandon their role as spectator in favour of performer, rather the participator becomes a hybrid of the two.

It is, he writes, 'a change from a simple audience role to an audience participant role', aptly naming it the 'audience-performer role' (White 2013:160). It is a troublesome situation to be in I would argue. On the one hand the participant is separate from the collective whilst remaining their representative, and on the other hand is also a part of the world in which the collective is not. In addition to this "no man's land" of audience-performer is the actual engagement of the new role in such a way as to develop the performance whilst minimising the 'risk to social esteem' identified by White previously (White 2013:159). In my experience I would argue that all of these factors are true of my own discernment journey also. There is an element of being in this other realm of "no man's land" where one risks social esteem whilst simultaneously accepting an invitation to step away. What is key to both however is the sense that one is not fully separated from the collective. As White explains it 'the 'audience' aspect is not extinguished in this change' and as 'audience-performer' our perspective is 'altered so that we now watch and listen from a much greater proximity [...] intimately close to the action' (White 2013:160).

It is such intimacy and involvement that is arguably worth the risk as inevitably it results in an altered experience, one which, on our return to the collective, will have a texture to it that others will not have. It is with this expectant intimacy that the Church offers Christ's invitation to follow. Examining the episodes in the Gospel where Christ calls His disciples, there can be found numerous examples of intimacy and risk which involve the chosen men saying yes. One good example of this can be found in St Matthew's Gospel where Jesus calls one of His disciples, also called Matthew. As a local tax collector Matthew was surely not the most popular person in his town. Notorious for taking more than their due and lining their own pockets, tax collectors were regarded by the Pharisees (a group of orthodox Jews) as being

amongst the lowest of the people¹. As an operator for the Roman government, Matthew would not have been popular and nor would Jesus by being seen with him. In the Gospel we are told that Jesus saw ‘Matthew sitting at the tax collectors booth [...] “Follow me” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him’ (Matthew 9:9). On seeing this the Pharisees questioned the other followers of Jesus: “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” [...] On hearing this Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice’ for I have not come to call the righteous but the sinners’ (Matthew 9:11-14). There are several interesting points to be raised concerning this passage. Firstly, there is an intertextual element when Christ asks the Pharisees to understand ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice’, as this is part of Old Testament Scripture (Hosea 6:6). Secondly it offers different approach to the notion of sacrifice. Until this point I have argued that response to invitation requires sacrifice. Whilst this still holds true for the case of Mathew, Jesus presents the invitation as an opportunity for reconciliation: between God and the tax collector and between the Roman authority and Jewish elders. Thirdly it is evident here that although accepting Jesus’ invitation to follow, the Pharisees still understand Matthew as belonging to the collective, as separate from Jesus and His other disciples. This is apparent in the passage by them asking ‘why does *your* teacher eat with the *tax collectors and sinners*?’. The separation of Jesus and the disciples from Matthew and the sinners parallels the audience-performer model observed earlier. In this framework, Matthew is the audience member invited to participate. In White’s definitions, he risks damaging the ‘social esteem’ of both himself and Jesus, but with the chance of being ‘intimately

¹ This was also unaided by the political grievances between the Jews and Rome, to whom the Jewish people paid their taxes.

close to the action' (White 2013:160). If Matthew is the participant, surely Jesus and His disciples are the performers, whilst the Pharisees remain onlookers to the action. This threefold approach to the situation returns us to the symbolic nature of the triune and allows us to examine White's threefold approach to the participant on stage.

Just as Jesus calls us to bring ourselves and what we have to offer, White understands the participating audience member to do similarly. On accepting the invitation 'a participant has at least made a choice not to refuse to participate, but has often made a choice of something to offer' (White 2013:161). In my own experience of theatre I have memories of sitting in my seat thinking "not me, don't pick me" and enjoying great relief when the task has fallen on another unsuspecting audience member. White however offers a viewpoint that those who choose not to refuse can often consider bringing something to the performance that will enhance or develop it in a way that another person could not. Put this way, it is a more optimistic and exciting opportunity to be grasped rather than shied away from. It is in this offering that White's threefold model emerges. The performance that we give as participant 'emerges from our own body, and is sited in our body, the same site from which we 'watch' the performance' (ibid). In essence we take on three distinct roles at once. The participant is 'simultaneously *the performer*, the one who enacts the performance through choice, *the performance*, that emerges from their own body and *the audience* as they view it' (ibid²). It is a return to a representation of the triune and of the fragmented nature of the self. According to White, 'the social processes that produce a self (and self-understanding) [...] or through which we narrate our sense of self, are numerous' (White 2013:183). It correlates therefore that numerous

² White's italics

processes may result in numerous outcomes (or selves), though White's use of the terms 'sense of' and 'self-understanding' go some way in supporting the idea that the self is something to be learned about (discovered) rather than left to us to create. It is with this in mind that he develops the point in relation to the experience of audience participation writing that it 'is not that we have experiences, and afterwards attribute them to a self that is a feature of those experiences, but that the point of engagement with the world is the point of origin of both experience and the perception of self that can have experiences' (ibid). In essence, there is one same self that not only experiences but can also attribute that experience to a separate self, a previous one who they no longer are. In reality the two are indeed the same self³. A 'clear distinction between body and mind is fallacious' White writes, and it is perhaps this viewpoint that can help to support the self as one discoverable entity rather than a composition of identities (ibid). We are undoubtedly the product of our experiences, but it is the same self that endures and also remembers. The *Dictionary of Philosophy* also touches on the relationship between existence and the mind. Seventeenth century Irish philosopher and bishop George Berkeley promotes the theory of immaterialism. Berkeley understands that 'for a material thing, such as a chair or a tree, to exist is to be perceived by the senses [...] for a non-material thing, such as the mind or spirit of man or God, to exist is to perceive' (Mautner 2005:73-74). Thus the experiencing self operates via senses and the remembering self gives existence to that experience via mental perception, though both (particularly in the case of audience participation) are carried out by the one same self: 'we have *ideas*

³ This notion is not dissimilar to that of Richard Russo (Chapter Two) in his description of being 'two states [...] along the same continuum' (Russo, 2003).

of that which is perceived, and *notions* of the mind or spirit that does the perceiving' (ibid)⁴.

Critical thinker Caroline McHugh also blends elements of perception and existence when it comes to discovering the self. In a return to the theoretical existence of several selves within, McHugh has developed a four step framework (not unlike that of Nearly Real Theatre) that aims to culminate in a more precise understanding of who we are. Speaking at The Art of Being Yourself conference, McHugh argues that there is 'one true note we were destined to sing' and that she places the definition of success 'not monetarily' but on those who have 'figured that [note] out' (McHugh, 2019). The viewpoint sits neatly in the argument of this thesis for if, as McHugh suggests, there is 'one true note' this is surely indicative of us having an individual purpose (ibid). This purpose (which itself is indicative of a purpose-giving entity) is therefore unique to us and sets us apart. The musical analogy also fits nicely with the idea of individuals as building blocks to a bigger collective. Much as a symphonic orchestra has instruments with separate notes played at separate times, put together something much more dynamic and pleasing is created. It is perhaps a crude analogy though I would argue that it links McHugh's thinking to this thesis. If, also, there is indeed one purpose for which we are each intended then surely the act of discovering it takes precedent? For if we were left to create that purpose we perhaps risk missing the very 'note' McHugh describes (ibid). I would add here that to create our own purpose may not result in a less happy or less worthwhile existence, but that we risk passing by an opportunity of deep fulfilment. Arguing that 'individuality really is all it's cracked up to be', McHugh introduces the theory of the 'true mirror' (ibid). In our normal use of mirrors we do not

⁴ Mautner's italics

truly see what others do, but rather see a distorted image of ourselves, a backwards world were left and right swap over and so when we seek an image of our physicality we are in fact not seeing the true picture. In a “normal” mirror, McHugh argues, we seek ‘reassurance’, whereas in the ‘true mirror’ we ‘look for revelation’ (ibid). Of course, in relation to science and physics there is indeed a formula for placing mirrors in such a way as to face one another and so see the “real” us, but McHugh’s theoretical mirror focuses not on the physical but on mental and thus returns us to the subject of perception. When ‘you’re a kid’ McHugh says, ‘you are fantastic at being yourself as you don’t know how to hide your differences’, and so we are oblivious of the need to blend in (ibid). In a bid to help us return to this celebration of being different, McHugh offers her ‘I complex’ (ibid). The model, which again sees a return to the triune pattern, separates our self-understanding into three parts: ‘superiority, inferiority’ (both of which she describes as ‘fragile’ aspects of the mind) and ‘interiority’ (ibid). Whilst the initial two require the others around us to maintain, the final aspect of the trio is ‘completely un-comparative’ and, according to the psychologist, ‘the only place in life where you have no competition’ (ibid). At any time, each of the three can be engaging with McHugh’s model of the ‘four different selves’:

- I. ‘Perception’: The self that wonders what ‘everybody else thinks of’ us and whilst we ‘will never be perception-less’ it is important to be ‘perception-free’.
- II. ‘Persona’: The self that we ‘want people to think’ of us as. This self is not ‘about being fake’ but rather about ‘possibility’ and ‘potential’.
- III. ‘Ego’: The self we see ourselves as. This comes with ‘good and bad days’.
- IV. ‘Self’: The unchanging self-identity. The ‘you that you were when you were 7 and the you that you will be when you are 107’.

(McHugh, 2019)

The model, which adds a new texture to the distinction between the experiencing and the experienced self, is noteworthy. Might it be that, as a child, the fourth aspect reigns in control and as we develop a greater sense of awareness of those around us, the initial three begin to take over? Either way, McHugh's model encourages us to dig to the fourth level and place the four aspects before the 'true mirror' (ibid). It also seems appropriate that she understands there to exist an 'unchanging' version of who we are, again contributing to the argument that a true, definitive version of the self exists (ibid). When we place our character into the four compartments as it were, we can begin to separate the differing aspects and understand ourselves in a new light: a process which McHugh co-ordinates at her psychological institution IDology.

Dialogue with Practice

Continuing the theoretical explorations presented, the practice of this chapter is divided into three acts, each consisting of a four-performer script followed by a monologue. The trisecting of the piece continues the thematic of the triune but also allows for greater attention to be placed on each of the three main characters in the short play. Exploring Gareth White's proposal of being 'intimately close to the action' each monologue sees one audience member sit opposite the performer and draw the images that come to mind in response to what they hear (White 2013:160). The piece is purposely non site specific and so by seating the 'audience-performer' in such a way, the structural dynamics of performer/recipient are maintained whilst (depending on the performance arena) the participant remains somewhat out of the collective (ibid). It is also reminiscent of the mirror composite offered by Caroline McHugh. Following strict instruction, the intention is that participants not only 'actively harness the potential encoded in the performance' but also engage with the theme of sacrifice through offering their artwork (Jürs-Mundy 2013:256). Symbolically, through their art, participants can be understood to leave a part of their self with the performance. It is, as White describes, their 'something to offer' (White 2013:161). The one word title given to the artwork is purposefully left secret until the end. In this way, the performer and participant share something that the larger collective do not. This further develops the idea that the participant is somehow distanced from the audience and engages with the performance in a way in which they do not.

There is also an intertextual element at work in the practice. Again there is a return to the experimental typography denoting character differences rather than names. It is only in the monologues that character names are identified. Sharing in the visual texture of ink on the page, the piece ties itself to its predecessors of this thesis whilst, through its theoretical explorations, simultaneously identifies itself with this chapter. In this way it aims to realise the 'note' it was destined to sing as performance, whilst remaining part of the greater collective of this degree as a whole (McHugh, 2019).

ii. How Love is Spelt

Returning attention to performance, it is helpful to examine practice that places attention on the theme of identity. Initial examples include Craig Taylor's piece *One Million Tiny Plays About Britain* (2009), builds an image of the UK by charting the individual characters that live there, 2016 Lyric Theatre festival *Vivid Faces* which showcased eight plays exploring the flexibility of identity (including nationality, political, family and religious) and more experimental practitioners such as Gob Squad, The Wooster Group and Stan's Café who all uniquely contribution towards the identity of theatre itself. One playwright that can be seen to engage with both identity and invitation is Chloë Moss and in particular her piece *How Love is Spelt* (2004). As White writes, to make one 'forgetful of self requires much work' and the play offers a window into the experience of a woman who intends to do just that (White 2013:181). Premiering at The Bush Theatre, the play follows the five attempts made by Peta to understand who she is, with the blurb of the printed version asking if you can 'ever really run away from yourself?' (Moss 2004:88). By paying close attention to each of the five scenes in the play, Moss can be observed to explore philosophical understandings of the self, what that means in relation to the other and the risk involved in perpetual searching. Moreover, the play introduces the (as yet) undiscussed relationship between gender and identity and so provides opportunity to build on this important topic also.

The play begins the morning after a Peta's one night stand with a man called Joe and initially draws our attention to the first glimpse of our identity understood by others: our name. Repeatedly referring to her as 'Petra', Peta reminds Joe that 'it's Peta, not Petra' (Moss 2004:6). Joe is quick to respond:

JOE: Peta. Ain't that a bloke's name?

PETA: If you're a bloke

JOE: Yeah 'course. Sorry, I didn't mean –

PETA: It's spelt with an 'a' instead of 'er'. P-e-t-a.

(ibid)

What is interesting is that the initial dialogue commences with Joe offstage and so an audience might be led to believe that Peta is in fact named Petra, and thus someone she is not. It is also pertinent that Peta's name should be misunderstood as its male counterpart, firstly because it brings the topic of gender into the thematic discussion of identity, and secondly (in relation to this thesis) Peter is a significant figure in the Bible and the followers of Jesus, particularly because of his name. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus asks His him 'Who do you say I am?', to which he replies 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God' (Matthew 16:15-16). As part of His response Jesus tells him, 'I tell you that you are Peter [which in Greek means "rock"]', and on this rock I will build my church' (Matthew 16:18). Thus, as Peter becomes the basis on which the church is built, it is ironic that the play should be built upon a vaariant of this name also. As the scene develops we learn that Joe has a daughter, Hayley, whom he has not seen since she moved to Cyprus as a child with her mother. Immediately we are brought back to relationship between identity and the mind. Peta asks Joe if he has children to which he responds 'no...well, yeah I have' (Moss 2004:9). On asking her age, Joe replies:

JOE: (*thinks*) Nine. She'll be nine now... just about. Nine in...May. Actually. I don't see her. She's called Hayley. I don't see her, not since she was a baby. I didn't leave her.

(Moss 2004:10)

The final sentence can be further understood via the first point on McHugh's model and how we can be conscious of what people think of us.

JOE: I know what she looks like...in me head. Spitting image of me. But pretty. I got a picture. She's a baby but you can't half tell [...] I'd get a shock if she was different...from in me head. Don't know what I'd...yer know.

(ibid)

What is notable here is that the identity of his daughter, is once again bought into existence via mental perception. Owning the picture, Joe could be seen to put an identity onto Hayley and the fact that he would 'get a shock if she was different' surely contributes to the fixed persona he has of his estranged daughter (ibid). From an alternative angle also, for the audience (and at least for Joe) Hayley's identity is to be found in the mind of the other (her father) rather than herself.

Scene two introduces a new persona for Peta, obtained via her employment. In the previous scene we are informed that she works as an administrator in advertising, here however we learn that she is now a student studying 'fashion design' (Moss 2004:30). It is also made apparent that Peta and Joe entered into a relationship but have since broken up. The scene begins with Peta returning to her London bedsit after a night out with a teacher named Steven. Unsure as to whether or not to stay the night, the two characters discuss their previous relationships (p.22-26). As the conversation develops, attention turns to Steven's break-up where he tells Peta:

STEVEN: She left this note when she moved out, at the top it said, 'Enclosed: Bits of my head for you to keep. I don't want them any more.' [...] There was something so...final about that. Much more than her physically not being there. Giving back her thoughts along with all the CDs and books and crap.

(Moss 2004:29-30)

It is interesting to understand the thoughts of the other as artefacts of the relationship and, therefore, its identity. In a reference back to Hayley McGee and her piece *The Ex-boyfriend Yard Sale*, Moss shifts the understanding of relationships and identity away from tangible objects and into the intangible mental sphere. The idea that someone can literally give their thoughts about someone back to them is significant, if impossible. With Steven remarking that his ex-girlfriend was ‘Giving back her thoughts’, this is surely indicative of the fact that, just with the ‘CDs and books’, they never actually belonged to her (ibid). This is further complicated however in the preceding lines about the note when we are told that what is enclosed within it are ‘Bits of [her] head’ for him to keep (ibid). This surely places ownership of the thoughts back to the ex-partner. It is a problematic equation with regards as to whom now “owns” the thoughts, but the idea of moving away from a chapter of life by separating oneself from one’s thoughts is another example which lends itself to White’s understanding of the experiencing/experienced self. Arguably the ex-partner is distancing her experiencing self from Steven (and therefore a previous identity as his partner⁵) and shifting towards a self that has experienced. Implementing White’s understanding of course, we can argue that these are in fact the very same self. Peta persuades Steven to stay by offering him the bed to top and tail in. On seeing a picture facing the bed, Steven asks:

STEVEN: Who’s that?

PETA: Me Dad. Should turn him around... he wouldn’t be happy

STEVEN: Would he disapprove?

⁵ Or perhaps his “other half” as is often colloquially used.

PETA: Catholic

(Moss 2004:36)

The scene ends with a Peta falling asleep and sees Steven sneak out of the bedsit.

Scene three sees a new employment identity for Peta, now working as Librarian. Having been on another night out, Peta plays the good Samaritan and brings a girl back home with her, Chantelle, who became too drunk to look after herself. Immediately we return to the familiar misconception over Peta's name:

CHANTELLE: Listen, this is gonna sound really bad but ... I've forgotten your name.

PETA: Peta

CHANTELLE: Peta... 'course yeah, sorry babe. (*Beat*) Isn't that a bloke's name?

PETA: Only if you're a bloke... it's spelt with an 'a' instead of 'e-r'.

(Moss 2004:45)

The exact repetition of the dialogue heard with Joe in the first scene, leads us to believe that this is something Peta has got used to saying. What it is also indicative of is that Peta's identity is often misconceived by others: an ironic note when one considers that Peta is herself searching for an identity. As the scene develops we learn that Peta and Steven ended up having a relationship but have now separated. Though no indication is made in the script that Peta has moved away from her bedsit, she remarks:

PETA: 'that's why I moved down really, just to get away from it...couldn't seeing him... it cracked me up [...] I miss him...I miss what I thought he was. That was too long ago now though. Different Life.

(Moss 2004:48)

It is notable that Peta also enters into the complexity of the experiencing/experienced self when she remarks that her relationship with Steven was a 'Different life' and that

in some way 'moving down' means a separation from a previous self (ibid). It is also noteworthy that Peta should 'miss what [she] thought he was', as this again ties Steven's identity in some way to the mind of his partner (ibid). What becomes apparent in the scene is Peta's sense of searching. Having initially moved away from Liverpool to London, her searching first of all is a physical. By this point in the one act play however, Peta's new methodology of searching increasingly makes use of the other: firstly Joe, then Steven and now Chantelle. The subject of searching is then touched upon as the pair talk about their future. Chantelle asks, 'what do you really want to do?' to which Peta replies:

PETA: I'm not sure...loads...everything really. Change me mind all the time, I want to do something that makes people ask questions, do you know what I mean? Makes me feel proud. I'm fed up of being the one who does all the asking.'

(Moss 2004:51)

It seems as though Peta has grown tired of doing the searching. One can only speculate on why that may be but one answer might be that her search is drawing no conclusions. If she herself wants others to do the asking then perhaps the answer to her searching lies with the other. If it is the other that can stimulate an identity response through their questioning, this would sit neatly with the fact that Peta has, in each scene so far, turned to the other in order to understand herself. Placed into McHugh's paradigm, one could argue that Peta sits very much in the transition between stages two and three, being concerned about the 'potential' and the self 'that keeps moving' (stage two) whilst also being preoccupied with what she thinks of herself (stage three) (McHugh, 2019).

The penultimate scene sees Peta being nursed by her downstairs neighbour Marion, after falling downstairs. It becomes apparent that Peta is pregnant but a connection between that and the incident on the stairs is not made explicit. In a shift towards a relationship between location and identity, Peta remarks that:

PETA: London's big –

MARION: Too big

PETA: You can be who you like

(Moss 2004:60)

It is an interesting point that negates a flexible identity in a location where no one knows who you are. There is some logic in this as, after all, if nobody knows who you are you can tell them what you want. What is not clear however, is whether Peta's last response means she can toy with differing identities or whether she is, in her move south, looking to "perform" somebody different from who she knows herself to be. The latter would support the notion of a truly unescapable self, whilst the former would support the notion of creating different selves. It is not until a short while later in the scene that Peta seems to support the idea of an unescapable self. Marion reassures her that she has been in Peta's 'shoes', to which Peta responds:

PETA: No, you haven't. No one has ever been in my shoes. No one's ever been in anyone else's shoes but their own.

(Moss 2004:63)

Though perhaps a dated metaphor, the idea of being in the footwear of others is a neat analogy for the "trying on" of different identities. What is perhaps underlying in

Peta's response is the realisation that she will only ever wear her own shoes no matter where she physically goes or whom she is with. It is apt therefore that the audience's unanswered questions are resolved in the following scene.

The final scene, five, sees Peta open the door to a man named Colin. On being asked why she moved away, Peta responds that she 'wanted to see what it was like to leave home' (Moss 20014:78). A home is a base-camp. It is often a metaphor for stability, comfort and protection. Returning to the OED, the term is defined in several ways and perhaps most notably as 'a refuge, a sanctuary; place or region where one naturally belongs' (OED, 2019). Continuing, Colin retorts that Peta 'left home four years ago' to which she replies 'That wasn't me home [...] You are' (ibid). Combined with the understanding of the OED, Peta here describes her 'refuge' and 'sanctuary' as being Colin and that being with him is where she 'naturally belongs' (OED, 2019). It is another example of Peta finding her self/identity as being with the other. Colin proceeds to pick up the picture of Peta's father mentioned earlier in the play, remarking 'I'm not very [...] photo...genic. Am I?' (Moss 2004:77). With this we now understand Colin to be Peta's father but shortly afterwards he adds 'I saw your dad the week' (Moss 2004:78). This now locates Colin's identity at the will of the audience. If he is not Peta's father, yet she has a photo of him in the bedsit and refers to him her Dad, then perhaps Colin is her step/adoptive/non-biological father? There are arguably religious links here also as Jesus encourages us to refer to God as our 'Father' (Luke 11:2) and, as Peta identifies her home as with Colin, Christ also invites us to approach God with a sense of Him being our 'refuge' and 'sanctuary'⁶ (OED, 2019). As the scene heads towards its climax, we learn that Colin is in fact the ex-partner Peta ran away from to

⁶ Of which term, the OED defines as 'a holy place' (OED, 2019).

come to London at the beginning of the play. Looking retrospectively the repetitive nature of Peta's searching, (twice resulting in new relationships) has come full circle to where she began. Put another way, the very self she was aiming to "escape" became the same self that, ultimately, she wanted to "return to". The play ends with the two characters leaving the bedsit together with Colin prepared to take care of Peta and her unborn child. In an ironic way the new life inside of her could be understood as the (literal) birth of a new identity, with Colin perhaps qualified for the assumed stepfather status possibly adorned to him earlier.

Dialogue with Practice

The practice of chapter three interrogates the flexibility of identity. In *Hands and Journey*, no names are mentioned at all, and even the deceased in *Time* is only referred to as 'whatsername' (p.11). Names are only mentioned in the monologues and even so are names that can be shortened so as to create a new one. As a whole though the piece explores a variety of other interpretations regarding identity. Just as Peta in Chloë Moss' play sifts through a range of jobs so too does Archie in *Monologue A*. Journeying from person to person on his first encounter at speed dating, Archie is able to "try on" different personas in the search for one that he likes: 'I was 12 different men that night [...] I went from shop assistant to CEO in five moves' (p.7). Similarly to Peta, Archie finds himself running away from the person he has known himself to be. The idea that he should be using a dating scenario to understand himself is an example of our reliance on the other in such circumstances.

One common factor that links all three Acts is the arrival of 'A man' who has 'seen better days'. In each of the pieces that man represents an element in the search for identity. In *Hands* he does not know his name, in *Time* he is unaware of temporality and in *Journey* he does not know where he is going. Purposely introduced towards the end, his entrance is intended to disrupt the flow of the scene up until that point. In addition to this, the light heartedness of the three pieces is further punctuated by the downbeat monologues that follow them. In this respect the piece as a whole is fragmented and uneven, happy and sad, a concoction of searching and stability.

It is perhaps *Journey* that best identifies itself with the physical searching of Peta. The performers are lost. Perpetually stuck in a one way system they find themselves at the same roundabout only to start the cycle again. There are two interpretations at play here. Firstly, as is often with performance, one can choose to suspend their disbelief and understand the car to be travelling in a circle. Alternatively, the use of lights and sound effects highlighted in the stage directions could all add to the irony that in reality they are a group of performers going nowhere. Either interpretation would fit the description that the journey is not progressing. Just as Moss presents her main character as geographically relocating only to go back to where she started, so too do the characters in the car believe themselves to be geographically moving, only to find themselves where they began.

iii. The View From The Vatican

Earlier this year the Vatican released a document detailing its stance on the topic of gender, identity and self-identification after birth, with its title taken from the book of Genesis: *Male and Female He Created Them: Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education* (2019). The document is particularly appropriate for this thesis which, until now, has shifted attention away from identity and gender, though the two topics are (I would argue) intertwined. Arguably controversial in parts, the document draws on previous Papal Exhortations (official Papal documents) and in particular *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love) an Exhortation given by Pope Francis in March 2016. It argues that gender neutrality ‘denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and woman and envisages a society without sexual difference’ going on to articulate that ‘consequently, human identity becomes the choice of the individual, one which can also change over time’ (Congregation for Catholic Education 2019:1). This is particularly significant to this writing as the document here begins to contribute to the topic of self-created identities. Though specifically addressing the topic of gender, I would suggest the document can be recontextualised towards the discussion of identity in a wider frame, particularly as it addresses the issue of identity and freedom of choice. With regards to what it terms as ‘anthropological theories’ of the twentieth century, it describes gender theory as being ‘based on a reading of sexual differentiation that was strictly sociological, relying on a strong emphasis on the freedom of the individual’ (Congregation for Catholic Education 2019:7). This is a complex and perhaps problematic viewpoint. It is interesting that the document should introduce the sociological aspect of gender identification as this particular area could locate itself neatly in terms of McHugh’s framework (particularly between stages two and

three) and also allows for a new reading of White's approach to the experiencing/experienced self. It does this by relocating this self into a sociological sphere of the experiencing other and how we want to be received and/or experienced from without. This again, as observed in Moss' play, locates our understanding of self to perhaps remain, in some part, with the other. The introduction of the topic of freedom is an interesting one. Freedom is a precious commodity, not only in sociological terms but also in Christianity, with the Church arguing that freedom (and free will) as being of extreme importance to God. In essence, without freedom of choice we cannot opt to do good of our own accord. Would it were that as humans we could only do good, the essence of freedom is taken away from us and we are *forced* to act out the will of God. Given the choice however, we can freely choose to do wrong or right and thus reveal to Him (and our self) that we opt for doing what is right over what is wrong. Thus, freedom is crucial in both society and Christianity. The document argues that gender identification be linked with an element of freedom and so freedom and choice are once again reintroduced together. I would argue that to be one's self is perhaps the most freeing act of all. For one to feel unshackled by the constraints of an environment or people is paramount to us living full and indeed fulfilled life. What becomes problematic is when plethora of choice perhaps begins to hinder the living out of who we are. Returning to Moss' play, it could be argued that Peta sought to try out a range of different identities, concocting new stories in relation to the man in the picture beside her bed, the jobs she worked at and the history of her life she shared with others, all of which restricted the "true Peta" from emerging. Of course, the opposite could be argued that in fact, the toying of stories and identities led to the realisation of who she really was. In either scenario, it would appear that by exploring identity as choice

resulted in the same outcome: a return to who she was in the beginning. The document continues saying that such choice offers a ‘confused concept of freedom in the realms of feelings and wants [...] as opposed to anything based on the truths of existence’, thus introducing the concept of acting on emotion in order to achieve a sense of freedom (Congregation for Catholic Education 2019:11). In my MA investigation into performance typography and the mind, I wrote in detail about the Freudian concept of acting on impulses and how (in a law laying civilization) to do so does not always result in a positive outcome⁷. Here though, the acting out of ‘feelings and wants’ is presented as a ‘confused concept’ in light of the fact that (the document argues) freedom should be based on the ‘truths of existence’ and reality (ibid). Again, whilst the emphasis is placed specifically towards gender and sex differences, I would argue that on a more philosophical level, the ‘truths of existence’ and thus who we are, are not always a clear-cut scenario (ibid). As this thesis argues the reality of our identity need not be found in our outwardly appearance but might possibly exist via a more inward exploration. Our self-expression to the world (stage two in McHugh’s theory) can often be at odds with what lies beneath that surface.

In cyclical return to the uniqueness of our place in a larger social construct, the document goes on to claim that the ‘*formation of one’s identity* is based on the principle of otherness, since it is precisely the direct encounter between another “you” *who is not me* that enables me to recognise the essence of the “I” who is me’⁸ (Congregation for Catholic Education 2019:14). In other words we see a return to knowing who we are by knowing who we are not. Religiously speaking, I would understand that the “you” *who is not me*’ goes further than just separating us from

⁷ See *Explain Your Self*, 2017

⁸ Their italics

other people. Rather, I believe it urges us to seek aspects of who we are in our larger global family (ibid). A biproduct of this is, perhaps, human dignity. It is also a reminder that whilst we play a very individual part in communal existence, we are each no greater or lesser than anyone else. By looking for aspects of who I am in others, I can identify myself as belonging to the aforementioned global family, whilst detailing the parts of me that are specifically unique. The self, it goes on to proclaim 'is completed by the one who is *other than self*' and that such 'reciprocity' is 'derived from and sustained by the Creator': a shared and sustaining origin that ties us collectively and uniquely (Congregation for Catholic Education 2019:17-18).

In a return to the initial topic of audience participation, the scenario acts as a suitable simile for this very argument. In the collective of a theatre audience each is no greater or lesser than those they are next to. Each recipient brings with them their own unique responses and engagement to the performance. In the event of participation, often we can observe a participant with a view to imagining ourselves in that position and how we may differ in action and response from them, thus highlighting our uniqueness in the ephemerality of performance. There is, of course, an end point to such ephemerality but the fact that as audience we disperse does not take away the fact that for that epoch of time we were a collective and so are tied by our experienced/experiencing selves. So, I would argue, it must be also be with identity. A unique building block - originally and beautifully made - without need of our own embellishment that sits in a space only we can occupy. To choose how that looks potentially risks the missing out of such a role. For some perhaps, this element of choice is indeed a freeing thing, with limitless possibility. As with theatre though, the reality of our existence is that it too is ephemeral. We have but a limited time frame in which take up our place. Sitting between the binary of the limited and the

limitless is a difficult space to be in, but is one which lends itself beautifully to theatre – the endless adventures that occupy their specific space and time. Just as one may seek to understand what is at the heart of the performance or enjoy the moment for what it is, so too is it with life. My argument in this writing falls on the former: that what sits at the heart of our life is who we are. Find that out and perhaps limitless reinventing becomes less freeing and rather more incarcerating.

Dialogue with Practice

It is appropriate that the Vatican document should introduce the topic of freedom as its binary captivity is widespread throughout the practice. In *Monologue A* Archie describes how he feels incarcerated by his own body: 'I felt like I was me, but I was trapped inside of me' (p.7). In *Monologue B* Andrew is trapped in a marriage and sexuality he feels distanced from, and in *Monologue C* Stephen finds himself trapped by the guilt of abandoning the baby. What is also significant about the three examples is that they all engage in sharing a secret with the participant (lying at the speed dating / sexuality / driving away from the baby). Secrets are also incarcerated. They are not free to roam and so by sharing them, the characters can be seen to tie themselves to the participant. In the same way, the one word title is whispered in the ear of the performer in order that the bond be reciprocated.

As the Vatican document suggests 'difference and reciprocity' are key components to gender identity (Congregation for Catholic Education 2019:1). This is explored in the piece as all the performers are male. It is important to highlight that, as with all of the practice of this thesis, the text is the building block. Directions are sparsely used in order that theatre makers feel ownership of the work. The same is true in terms of casting. Though the characters are introduced as **Female**, *Female*, Female and A Man, all are parts are 'played by males' (p.1). Whilst initially this was to explore the relationship between gender and identity (particularly as the nameless characters are referred to by gender) it is appropriate that any casting of the piece understands 'male' in light of contemporary attitudes towards gender. As a biproduct this would then further develop the point raised in the Vatican document that identity be linked to an inwardly exploration as opposed to an outwardly one.

The corporeal is further investigated in *Hands* where the title body part is scrutinised by *Female* and Female. Focusing only on how disproportionate they are to the rest of the body, the two performers fail to see them as anything more than body parts. Their owner **Female** however uses them as a springboard for memories of her life. In essence, the hands go further than being part of the body, they form their own identity. This is supported by the distancing of **Female** from her hands as she refers to them as 'these hands' rather than 'my hands' (p.5). In separating herself from her hands, **Female** makes a distinction between who she is and who her hands are. The intention is that she presents her body as objective material and her understanding of who she is as something separate. In this way, the male casting of the piece again echoes that identity is an inward endeavour rather than exterior appearances.

A note on Stage Directions

This final piece of performance practice, *Three*, must be approached as one play formed of three separate acts. Each act is comprised of a light and comedic dialogue exchange between three friends (*Hands*, *Time* and *Journey*) followed by a monologue (A, B and C) respectively. Whilst the dialogue exchange takes place in a designated space for performance, the monologues must *always* occur amongst the audience space. This reason for this is two-fold. Firstly, it raises the question of our place with the other. If the performers have their designated space, and viewers theirs also, then there is a fixed (and arguably safe) understanding of them/us. To bring the performer into the viewing space not only disrupts this safety but also calls into question the relation between them/us and specifically me/you. Secondly, and following on from this, a new performance is being made in the viewing arena by the designated “actor” and newly designated “audience-performer”. To ensure that this transition takes place smoothly there are clear instructions written to the audience participant who will then go on to give a title (identity) to their performance artwork. *Hands* takes place in St Hugh’s Church Hall, *Time* outside of a crematorium and *Journey* in a car. The monologues must be firmly rooted in the surroundings in which they occur. Dialogue throughout the acts are distinguished by typography and names are only used in the monologues. Each performer must stick to their allotted typographical identity and all performers must recognise their gender as male.

Practice

Three

Act One: Hands

[Lights fade up to reveal two women, **Female** and Female. Taller than the other performer, **Female** stands in a position of power. She wears a purple corduroy skirt and flower-print blouse. The younger Female sits at a table waiting. She is conservatively dressed and has come straight from work. We are in St Hugh's Church Hall. It is old, well used. The smell of damp and old velvet curtains permeates into the audience. This is the place of childhood nightmares. A door slams open and a third *Female* enters. She carries a dented Quality Street tin. She wears a silk scarf and a light trouser suit. All characters are played by males]

Where have you been?

I'm sorry I'm late.

Yes we know you're late, where have you been?

I was busy

Well that's rude

I sent a message!

To whom?

Both of you!

Well I didn't get one, did you?

No.

So where's the message?

Oh I don't know, I was on a bus, maybe there was no signal!

A bus to where?

HERE! Look can we just get on with it please?

Well I'm sorry it's such a chore, you don't have to be here you know!

I know, I know. I'm sorry. It's all just been a bit mad. I wasn't looking at the clock, then I ran for the bus and now I'm late and I hate being late for anything, so now I'm stressed, and when I stress I get blotchy and out of breath - and now I feel a stitch coming on...

Alright! Chill out!

You're here now, that's the main thing.

Thank you. Sorry...

Right, let's sit down shall we?

Does anyone mind if I light a candle?

What for?

Oh you know, atmosphere.

It's not a seance!

I know, but it's one of those relaxing ones... 'Midnight zen'....Thought it might help us to de-stress.

Oh very well, but do it quietly.

I've bought biscuits with me if anyone wants one.

No thank you.

Ooh, I'll take one of those!

Great, here we go.

Thanks... Oh they're warm.

Yes - that's why I was running late, wanted to do these as a surprise.

How kind. Now, today I think we should...

Very lemony

Yes lemon and poppy seed. It's a family recipe.

Okay, rather than go over the minutes of our last meeting -

You'll have to give me that at the end!

I'm afraid I'm sworn to secrecy...

Girls! ...Okay, rather than go over the minutes of our last meeting - I think we all said what needed saying - I thought it best to dive straight into this month's theme, the body. Now I know there were a few raised eyebrows when I suggested this, but I think it very important to be open with one another about the bits we'd rather not have and the areas that make us who we are - after all, there's no shaming here and whatever we say may indeed help somebody else.... could you do that a little more quietly please?

It's the cellophane - it makes such a noise.

We know.

Sorry

Well, just take the candle out quickly and put it on the table.

Yes.... there we go.

Now, my body. Girls, take a good look at it.

Does anybody have a light?

You mean haven't bought anything to light it with?

Well it was just an impulse buy, I thought one of you two might have match or something.

Who carries matchsticks around with them these days?

...Boy scouts?

And do you seen any boy scouts?

Well, no...

Right.

...but I know they use this hall on Monday, there might be some left over.

Let's leave the candle for now shall we? Time is of the essence...

Okay.

Good. Now I want you look at my body.

I'll remember for next time..

Okay.

The matches I mean...

We know....Now I want you to look at my body. I want you to pick an area, a specific area, and concentrate on it. Really give it some thought for a few seconds... go on, I'll keep time.

[they stare]

Where did we choose?

I went for your left hand

Ooh, me too!

Wow, that's good!

I know right!

And what made you go for the left hand?

It just seemed unusually bigger than the other one.

Pardon?

She's right, it is a bit more plump. Are you left handed by any chance?

NO

It's not an insult. I'm a leftie.

No way, me too!

Wow, that's good!

I know, right!

Well this exercise only works when you choose separate areas!

Oh.

I'll switch hands.

Okay.

Right, let's do it again... now I want you to really

Concentrate

On that

Specific

Area of the body... I'll keep time.

[they stare]

Now what did we think?

Well I still think the left one is bigger.

I'm not so sure you know, the right one is pretty chunky too...

Well research suggests that we tend to zoom in on areas of other people's body that we think needs changing. Now, you both have selected my hands - possibly because they might be, only slightly, out of proportion to my arms... the task I have now is to tell you all the things about my hands that I like...

What for?

To emphasise the point that ultimately it's not what somebody else thinks that matters, but loving what you are that counts.

Nice.

[sincerely] **So, these hands. If these hands could talk they'd tell a tale or two. These hands have nursed babies, baked cakes, cut hedges, waved goodbyes, shook other hands in acceptance. They have been clean, they have been dirty, they have been burnt and soothed. These hands have lifted suitcases, pushed cars that won't start, swam in icy seas, took pictures. These hands have been stung by wasps, scratched by cats and bitten by fleas. They have knitted jumpers and cardigans, turned trousers into shorts, written Valentine's cards, dried tears, put slabs down, done push ups and pressed television remotes. These hands have hit people, they loved people, they have shaped clay and have broken wine glasses. These hands bear the lines of a life that's been lived.**

[pause]

Wow. Guess they've done quite a bit yeah.

[smiling] **They have.**

No wonder they're so big....

[a door opens - a man enters, he has seen better days]

Excuse me.

Yes?

Is this St Hugh's

The hall yes, the Church is over the road.

I'm not looking for the Church.

Well what do you want then?

I'm looking for the women's group.

Well I'm afraid we've already started.

Ah... Well can I sit and watch?

If you must - your name?

Oh... I don't really have one.

[the lights slowly fade to blackout]

Monologue A

Participant Instructions

- The participant sits opposite the performer anywhere among the audience.
- The participant sits in the chair with the clipboard, paper, pencil and rubber.
- As the monologue develops, the participant must draw whatever enters their mind.
- The participant must follow any instructions given by the performer.
- The participant is not required to speak and is to remain seated for the duration of the performance.

My name is Archie. That's not what it says on my birth certificate. That says Archibald. Weird eh? You see my Grandfather was named Archibald, as was his first son -my dad- and so was his first son - me. I hope I don't have a son. If I do he can choose his own name. I've decided I'm going to ask the registrar if we can just put (tbc) in the space where it says name. They'll probably say no. I wonder if it's against the law? Probably won't happen anyway. I'm single. I don't really meet people either. I've always been shy when it comes to that sort of thing. I had a friend once who took me speed dating. I found it a bit daunting. I just couldn't tell them the truth you see. It was too intimidating. I was 12 different men that night. I went through 12 different names, none of them Archie. I was a different age at different tables. My job went from shop assistant to CEO in five moves. You see I can tell people all the things I'd like to be. All the people I'd like to be. But when it comes to telling them the truth I can't quite bring myself to say it. My mate, the one who took me speed dating, he reckons it's because I don't really know who I am. Haven't worked it out yet. I think that's bollocks myself. I've not always been single you know. I was engaged to a girl once. Before you ask how I proposed, she was the one who asked me. It wasn't anything grand like, she just sort of said it. 'Dya reckon we should tie the knot?' She said. 'Alright then' I answered. It seemed the right thing to do at the time I suppose. We'd been to three weddings that year. All Church jobs and Golf Clubs. It was me in the end who backed out. I couldn't see it myself. I felt trapped. Like I was trapped inside myself. Weird that isn't it? I felt like I was me, but I was trapped inside of me. How do you explain that to someone? She soon married afterwards. I saw her this week actually. She had a baby. Didn't see the husband. Probably broke up. She was pushing a little girl around. 'That could have been me' I thought. She didn't see me. I saw her through the shop window. Cancer Research. I'd popped in to drop off my Mum's old clothes. Something she'd always done. I was going to sign up for the gift aid thing, but I don't pay tax. Apparently they can get more off the government if you do - I don't quite understand it myself. I'm happier on my own these days. I think it's nice coming home to an empty house. People might say it sounds sad, but you can concentrate when you're on your own, you can just be with your own thoughts. I've got to move out soon apparently. Landlord wants it back. Divorce or something. I don't pry. So I'm on the lookout for a place. Few weeks to go yet mind. I'm not fussy where I lay my head. I think that's the difference between a house a home. A house is building, a home is something that goes everywhere with you...actually, I think I do want children after all.

Participant Instructions

- Please remove the drawing from the clipboard, turn it over and write a one word title for your artwork.
- Please hand it to the performer, whispering the title in his ear.
- Please return to your original seat and do not share the title with anyone.

Three

Act Two: Time

[Lights come up. We are outside a crematorium. **Female**, *Female* and Female are stood smoking. Mourning clothes. Cars can be heard in the distance driving away. The stale smell of lilies permeates into the audience]

Couldn't stand her.

Don't say that!

Why not, it's true?

Yes but we shouldn't speak ill of the dead.

She never had a good word to say about me!

Now that's not fair.

Fourteen years I tried to get that woman to see sense. She was having none of it.

Well it doesn't really matter now does.

She who laughs last, laughs longest - that's what I think.

[A man walks past. He tips his hat. His hair has seen better days]

Sorry for your loss. / *Sorry for your loss* / **Sorry for you loss**

[Man exits]

I had to take a day off unpaid for this.

Oh not you as well.

I'm just saying. Tried to get it down as one them compassionate leave days. They weren't having it. Silly really, Tuesday's our quiet day.

Am I the only one who has come here to pay their genuine respects?

We're all here to pay our respects.

Well it doesn't sound like it! She was very kind lady who had a very hard life.

And whose fault was that?

What does that mean?

She didn't do herself any favours towards the end.

Well she was poorly.

That's no reason to cut everyone out.

She probably wanted to be on her own.

I doubt a woman who had four and half husbands wanted to be on her own.

How can you have half a husband?

Well that last one doesn't count.

Why doesn't he?

Because of his problem.

What problem?

Not my place to say...

Oh -

...but put it this way, I don't think he was - fully operational.

[Pause]

I've written a card from the three of us.

Well you can scratch name off.

Why?

Because I've bought my own.

Well that doesn't matter, she's not going to read them is she?

No - and nor is she coming to my funeral either.

[Beat]

Fancy dying at this time of year.

I know freezing isn't it.

I mean at Christmas!

Oh -

It's supposed to be a joyful thing, a happy time.

It is a happy time!

I'm still talking about Christmas!

Oh-

Did she have any family?

Nope - outlived her husbands.

No children?

I don't think so.

Well, not that we know of...

What do you mean by that?

Well there was the odd rumour that...

[The mans walks by again. Tips his hat. His hair has seen better days]

Sorry for your loss / Sorry for your loss / *Sorry for your loss*

[Man exits]

... the rumour that she did have a child but gave it away.

Why?

No one knows.

That's not true.

Believe what you want.

Well I think you're being very cruel.

Look, let's be right about this, you hardly knew the woman. I suffered her for fourteen years, if anyone knows anything about her it's me.

Well I admit I only met her a handful of times...

Precisely -

...but it doesn't mean I have to agree with everything you're saying.

I think it's probably best if we change the subject.

Agreed.

[Pause]

Well go on then. Change the subject.

I'm thinking.

Well don't suggest changing it if you don't have anything to say.

I did have something to say and now I can't remember it. You're putting me under pressure and when I'm under pressure I get nervous and when I get nervous I get blotchy and when I get blotchy I get out of breath - and now I feel a stitch coming on...

Oh somebody give her a valium.

I don't like funerals either.

Well nobody likes them really

I don't mind them.

Well I knew you wouldn't.

I think they're a reminder to us all.

Reminder about what?

That there's a finish line. We're not here forever. So get on with it whilst you can.

Get on with what?

Life.

And how do you suggest we do that?

Don't take anything too seriously. Don't forget it's about being happy and for goodness sake don't overthink.

Overthink what?

Anything. Poor old whatshername got plenty of time to contemplate in that box.

Oh honestly...

Well it's true. Nothing much else to do in there except think.

[Pause]

I don't much fancy dying.

No choice.

Ah yes, but I don't plan on doing it.

It can't be helped.

I wonder how I'll go?

Soon I hope...

Do you think it would be better if we all had a sell by date?

How do you mean?

Like, do you think it would be better to know exactly how long you've got from the word go? Like the Bible says everyone gets three score years and ten. So that's 70 years...

Or 25,550 days

...precisely. So if you knew exactly what you had, don't you think you'd spend your time more efficiently? At the minute, who knows what I've got left - I may as well live forever.

I can see the logic.

Bit unfair though.

What's unfair about it? Everybody would have the same - sounds very fair to me.

Yes but what if you died before you reached your sell by date? Could you leave your extra days to someone in your will.

No. Doesn't work like that...

Or worse still, what if you're fit and healthy when you reach 70?

Well, you'd be put down.

That's awful.

I'm not sure you know, I think she's on to something here.

Well I'm not signing up!

It's not optional.

It's not real either.

They'll bring it in one day.

[The mans walks by again. Tips his hat. His hair has seen better days]

Sorry for your loss / Sorry for your loss / Sorry for your loss

Excuse me?

We are sorry for your loss.

What loss?

The deceased.

I have't lost anyone.

Oh -

Then what are you doing here?

I'm not really sure...

[beat]

Might any of you happen to have the time?...

[Lights slowly fade to blackout]

Monologue B

Participant Instructions

- The participant sits opposite the performer anywhere among the audience.
- The participant sits in the chair with the clipboard, paper, pencil and rubber.
- As the monologue develops, the participant must draw whatever enters their mind.
- The participant must follow any instructions given by the performer.
- The participant is not required to speak and is to remain seated for the duration of the performance.

I'm Andrew. My friends call me Andy. I like that about my name. I'd hate it if I had one of those names you couldn't shorten. I work in a recycling plant. I don't let my job define me though. I'm in love with a man there. He doesn't know. Neither does my wife. My son knows. I tell him everything. I can trust him. He's not going to tell anyone. He's dead. Well, actually, the stone says he 'fell asleep' so I guess really he's just sleeping. I go most days. He still hasn't woken up. I'll just sit on the grass and talk to him. I like it. I quite like grave yards if I'm honest. I think they are peaceful. You get drugs down there though. I've seen them. Bit disrespectful, but what can you do? My wife and I don't really talk about it. What would we say anyway? She's having an affair. I know. She doesn't know that I know though. She's with him now. I think it's a him. Could be a her. That would be ironic. I followed her once when she went on one of her visits. Drove a few cars behind. Nice house. Must be doing well. I didn't get to see who it was though. She had a key. Let herself in. Very cosy. I told our son that. I said 'I might well be in love with a bloke but at least I haven't done anything about it'. I'd hate for him to feel sad though. I was just angry. I had visions for my life growing up. I always pictured myself as being successful. Happy. Not particularly wealthy, but comfortable. I wanted what everyone else imagined. My family, my friends and my mark on the world. Seems juvenile to think that now. Life isn't like that. We don't make my mark on life - life makes its mark on us. More than marks. Scars. Just as one heals another one rips open. I used to be happy. I used to hope. Now I sit talking to my dead son wondering why I feel the way I do. I suppose it's a sort of therapy in a way. A chance to gather my thoughts. I don't plan for the future now. What would be the point? Everything I thought I knew about life, I got wrong. Life will do what it wants. I have no control. I have no choice. To live, to die, to breathe, to remember. I haven't always worked in recycling. I do like it though. I can chart a tin can from its arrival, to its cleansing, to its melting and see it as something new. Even though it was junk, it has a new purpose. A new lease of life. I find that fascinating. More fascinating than save the earth and all that. Imagine being useless and suddenly useful. Poetic isn't it? Life doesn't work like that though eh? I think I'll tell this bloke how I feel. He works on the cleansing. He stands by the conveyor belt all day, every day. If anything comes by that's no good he throws it out. I sometimes just watch him. I'm depot manager you see. I can go wherever. People at school used to call me gay. I hated it. Nobody should tell anyone else who they are, where to go or who to be with. You hear something enough times though and you start to believe it yourself. I used to think 'what if they're right?'. Maybe they were. Maybe I've got me wrong - haven't interpreted my own signals to myself. We can be so sure of things in life only to have that rug pulled from underneath us. The only thing I really know about my self is my name - and I didn't even choose that. Andrew. Andy.

Participant Instructions

- Please remove the drawing from the clipboard, turn it over and write a one word title for your artwork.
- Please hand it to the performer, whispering the title in his ear.
- Please return to your original seat and do not share the title with anyone.

Three

Act Three: Journey

[The lights fade up to reveal **Female**, Female and *Female* in a car facing the audience. Female sits at the front holding up a steering wheel whilst *Female* sits next to her holding a single windscreen wiper. **Female** who sits behind, holds a large map book.]

I knew we should turned left.

How is that helpful?

Well how helpful is it when you don't listen to the map reader?

You're not the map reader.

I am.

No, you're not. Nobody designated you map reader.

I designated me map reader.

You can't designate yourself. Designation is conferred on somebody.

Very posh.

We're using the sat nav anyway.

I'm not using the sat nav.

We are all in the same car, therefore we are all using the sat nav.

I've heard stories about them you know. Going into rivers, driving over cliffs.

We're going round Birmingham's one way system, how many cliffs do you think we're going to plummet over?

I'm just saying.

I think we should just let her drive - she is at the wheel after all.

I knew you'd take her side.

I'm not taking sides, I'm just thinking about safety and letting her concentrate.

Just because you got the front seat, you have to agree with everything she says.

I don't even like sitting in the front!

They why am I stuck in the back?

Because I can't cope when you're next to me, telling me where to go.

I'm telling you now.

Yes but at least when you're in the back I don't have to look at you.

[Pause]

Nice Birmingham isn't it?

Not really.

I've never been before.

It's just like another city.

Well I hardly get to see places like this.

I'm sure we've been round this island.

I don't think so.

We have. We definitely have. I remember the statue. Look can we try my route with the map book?

You know this was supposed to be a pleasant experience? A bonding session for the three of us? All we've done is spent two hours getting lost and getting stressed.

I'm not stressed.

Well I am - and I'm sick of this thing sending me round in circles.

Do you think we should pull over?

Where? It's all double yellows.

Have you seen these new double reds? Not sure what that's about.

I think it means you can't stop there.

I thought's that what double yellows meant?

No, it means no stopping at any time ever, even with a blue badge.

They do pick their colours don't they, blues and reds and yellows.

All primary.

Oh yeah!

Right, that's it we're going back.

No / No

It took an hour and half to get here and half an hour of going round aimlessly. I think we should head back.

[The lightning indicates that the car has reached a set of traffic lights. They are on red. The faint sound of the beeping of the pedestrian crossing can be heard. As they wait in silence the back door opens and a man gets in. He looks tired. He has seen better days.]

What do you think you're doing?

Get out!

Who the hell are you?

Get out the car now. I'll scream. I'll do it.

So will I.

I won't because I haven't got a loud voice - but I'll wave.

You can honk the horn.

Oh yes, I'll honk the horn... and I'll wave.

You can't do both!

[They stare at him]

Well get out then!

I'm fine.

[The lights have turned to green - the car remains stationary]

What do you mean you're fine? Get the hell out!

I'm coming with you.

You don't even know us.

We'll get to know each other.

You don't even know where we're going!

I'm not fussed!

[Unhappy drivers can be heard beeping their horns behind]

I think you better drive.

Fine. But you're out at the next lights.

So how are we all?

Not bad...

Don't make small talk with him!

Lost are you?

No!

Yes we are actually.

Yeah... me too. Fun isn't it, being lost?

Not really no.

Why not?

Because strange men jump into the car and start talking to you.

I'm not strange. In fact I think we have a fair bit in common.

[Beat]

Right, here's the lights, you're getting out.

But they're on green...

I don't care.

Oh you can't kick him out if they're on green, that's hardly fair.

Have you heard yourself?

I just felt I ought to get in.

What are you talking about?

I don't know, I can't explain it. I just felt this urge to open the door and get in.

Who are you?

I was hoping you could tell me that.

Well where is it you think you're going to?

Anywhere really. I'll be happy for the change of scene.

This is weird, I really think we should kick him out.

Well he might be poorly....

I doubt it.

[shouting, slowly] *Are - You - Unwell?*

He's not deaf.

Look - I'm as shocked about all this as you are. Somethings you just can't explain though eh?

He's right.

I don't believe this.

It puts me in mind of my days hitchhiking.

Never done it myself.

Oh it's a ball. You meet some right characters.

I once won a ticket as a foot passenger on the dover to calais.

Ooh that's good.

It was only one way though, had to pay to come back.

[Beat]

Well this is like a little adventure isn't it!

Not really.

Oh lighten up. Its fun - the unexpected.

Is it?

Where's the excitement in knowing what's to come?...

[Pause]

[The lights snap to black. Horns can be heard around the auditorium. A blue light flashes over the spectators. The faint sound of sirens grows and fades away again.]

Monologue C

Participant Instructions

- The participant sits opposite the performer anywhere among the audience.
- The participant sits in the chair with the clipboard, paper, pencil and rubber.
- As the monologue develops, the participant must draw whatever enters their mind.
- The participant must follow any instructions given by the performer.
- The participant is not required to speak and is to remain seated for the duration of the performance.

Stephen. Steve. Stevie if you like. I'm not fussed. I don't go by much else really. Though sometimes people spell my full name with a V instead P-H. I don't bother telling them. What's the point? As long as my passport's right, I'm fine to go by whatever really. I'm a taxi driver. Have been for years. I know the roads out there inside and and back to front. I could do them with me eyes shut - although I don't recommend it. What I like most about my job is the people. People fascinate me. Their little ways, their nuances. For example I can usually tell if a fare is going to be chatty or not. The first give-away is where they sit. If they plonk themselves in the front it's a dead cert we're in for a chat. If they get in the back and sit behind the passenger seat, there is still the option for a chat, though it's not compulsory, but we usually have one. If they get in the back and sit behind the driver, its a silent fare. I don't like that. Not particularly because of the silence but because I can't see them. It unnerves me. Especially at the end when I ask where to stop - I'm never sure if they're still there. Nine times out of ten though people are friendly enough and want to break the journey up with a chat. Most of them get out and the whole thing's forgotten, but every now and then you get the ones that stick out. Some that stay with you. I was driving once at night. It was pretty dead so I decided to call it a day. At the time I lived just outside the city and had to drive through to get home. It was a ghost town really. Anyway I'm driving along and I see this figure on the kerb. I can't quite make it out at first but as I got closer, it started to become clearer. It was pile of blankets. Now it's not unusual in town to see stuff left outside the charity shop, but this was outside the church. I pulled up and wound the window down. It was crying. The blankets were crying. I got out. I never get out. Something took over and I got out. I peeled back the top layer and there it was. A baby. A tiny baby cushioned in the pile of blankets. I mean, what do you do? This was before mobiles and all that. I mean, tell me, what do you do? I panicked I got back in the car and wound the window up. Now I'm not a religious man, I don't go in for all that, but I sat in that car and for the first time ever I prayed. I said 'God. Please God, what do I do?'. Well I waited. And I waited. No divine intervention. No thunderclap and lightening bolt. I got back out. There was silence. No crying no traffic, no nothing. I walked over to the pile and the baby just stared. It just stared me. No blinking no shuffling. I touched its cheek. Cold. Stone cold. I put the blanket back over it. I got in the car and I drove off. I drove off. I went back the next morning but the blankets had gone. Nothing was in the news. I checked everyday for a whole month. Why? Can I ask you, am I a bad person?

Participant Instructions

- Please remove the drawing from the clipboard, turn it over and write a one word title for your artwork.
- Please hand it to the performer, whispering the title in his ear.
- Please return to your original seat and do not share the title with anyone.

[The lights fade up to reveal the three performers. Each of them sat facing the spectators. In their hands they hold the artwork given to them with the illustrations facing out. A man approaches the first performer. He reads out the title of the drawing. Slowly he moves to the next performer and does the same, before finally reading out the final title. After this the man stands at the back of the performance area. He is not longer a distraction.]

I am Archie

I am Andy

I am Stephen with a PH

*Who are you? / Who are you? / **Who are you?***

[blackout]

[end]

Conclusion

At the heart of this thesis is the act of self-discovery. Exploring theoretical, theological and philosophical approaches to the topic, the chapters are tied by three further elements located in each of them: identity searching (A), the internal/external (B) and the model of the triune (C). Close reflection in this concluding part of the document can draw attention to these areas and contextualise their place in the larger framework.

A. Identity Searching

In the act of searching we often seek to cover as much ground as possible and in the endeavour to search for an identity, the mechanics are much the same. Hidden in the preceding chapters are three possible starting points from which to begin such a journey. Chapter One postulates that the beginning of the search should involve addressing our origins. Employing the Bible to convey the root of creation, it is perhaps the divine that holds the key to us understanding who we are. The aptly named *The Beginning* in the practice of the chapter starts with a textual realisation of the separating cells during conception. The first word of the piece, 'one', is significant of a singular origin. Peeking at the number 8,192 the process reverses itself journeying back to its beginning. Chapter Two suggests that, rather than an external searching, identity is found within. Observing our own mentality objectively and artistically, it may be possible to commence journeying to the self deep within the unconscious. Finally, Chapter Three proposes that by starting with our place in the collective, we might affirm who we are. With an awareness of our differences and what we individually have to offer, a greater understanding of our role in the world might be ascertained. What each of the chapters presupposes is that there is something that is worth unearthing. Surely the sole objective of any

search is to discover and locate? What is problematic however, is when we do not quite know what it is we are searching for or what it is we should identify. The reality of this is twofold: the possible excavation of something we might not like, or the realisation of something better than we could ever have imagined.

B. Internal/External

The binary of the internal/external is the second binding feature fusing this thesis together. Opening with the example of Psalm 139, God and the self are initially addressed as divided entities. The Derridean concept of *différance* however invites us to question what might exist in the divide. Entering into the text is offered as one way in which this can be achieved and on doing so we might begin to see the self and the divine as inseparably joined. Chapter Two again returns us to the notion of the unconscious (internal) and its relationship with the conscious world (external). Accessible via dreaming, the free flowing self - understood by Susan Gannon as uninhibited and unbound – is in reality trapped inside the parameters of our sleeping. In a similar approach to its predecessor, the chapter invites us bring the unconscious over the divide and into our waking life. By doing so we might again see that they are in fact two ‘points along the same continuum’ of the self (Russo, 2003). It is the relationship between self and other that is scrutinised in the final chapter. In this respect the former becomes the internal, safe and surrounded but its external counterpart. What is different however is that rather than present any divide as being falsifiable, such separation between the individual and collective is celebrated. Difference here is offered as a useful tool in ascertaining our unique role in life. As the practice of the chapter exposes: *‘I can tell people all the things I’d like to be. All the people I’d like to be. But when it comes to telling them the truth, I can’t quite*

bring myself to say it'. The truth of who we are is offered as a joyful thing in the chapter, as nobody can quite fill the role as perfectly as we can.

C. Triune Model

Finally (and appropriately thirdly) this thesis is held together by an awareness of the triune. The model seeps not only into the structuring of the work (three chapters with three parts) but also into my practice (for example the three pillars of Chapter Two or the three monologue/typfaces of *Archie*, Andy and **Stephen** in Chapter Three).

Collectively however, there exists a larger triangle at work over the dissertation. As highlighted at the beginning of this conclusion, the founding themes of my argument are located in the theological, theoretical and philosophical. Reimagined, those areas might better be described as: my faith, my critical performance analysis and my experimental practice. Just as the triune model amalgamates three parts to make one, this project endeavours to offer the understanding of a total self, discoverable along three avenues: God, the internal and our relationship with the other.

Practice, the “I” and the ‘We’

With the initial aim of this project to seek support of a discovered identity over a created one, there have surfaced unexpected realisations as a result. Whilst the writing practice of this thesis is intended to continue the philosophical arguments presented within the chapters, it could be argued that it also offers a meeting place at which writer and reader can cross paths on their journey towards discovered identity. As highlighted at the very beginning, the thesis offers three initial starting points for such a journey (the divine, the mind and our relationship with the other) and on reflection, a further realisation has emerged from the practice: the possibility of performance writing serving as stepping-stones along the way. The performative pieces offered in this thesis are of course representative of my own journey, but

arguably they offer a guide as to how one might approach their own journey. Just as I separated the act of collective worship from individual faith, here too we have an example of embarking collectively on a journey of discovery but can separate this down into our own individual experience. In essence, the process of creating writing for performance to aide self discovery can be wholly individual but in the sharing of it, not necessarily lonely. It is that familiar quality the theatre seems to bring in uniting the “I” with the “we” yet consistently ensuring the experience remains individual and unique. Whereas I had initially aimed for the practice to reflect the chapter discussion, perhaps on reflection what I have now is the start of a collection of work that charts my own journey of self-discovery. Perhaps further to this if I was to separate the practice from their preceding chapters I may find I have arrived at three stand-alone pieces of theatre, and going forward could explore the possibility of the relationship that exists between them all, how they interact and how they might speak to my own sense of self now that this particular leg of my journey is through.

A Continuous Journey

It is true to say that search for meaning, purpose and identity is not a novel concept, but it is this very fact that ensures its consistent contemporality. With each individual that seeks to negate its complex path, it is refreshed and renewed. To understand why we are here and who we are is in essence to give our life purpose and worth. This thesis contributes in some small part to the wider conversation of the self and it does so with particular awareness towards Chapter Three. In this instance I am the individual negating my place amongst my contemporary collective. In the years to come, that collective may have shifted in terms of its values and creeds, but what may not have changed is the need for the individual to fathom their role within it. It is indeed an adventure and one that need not culminate in the negative, as the process

itself can be the forming of the individual. As Nearly Real Theatre founder Mo Cohen places it, the opportunity of discovering who we are is a freedom gained not by 'finding the answer, but by grappling with the question' (Nearly Real Theatre, 2018). Perhaps therefore, the true self is not a final destination, but rather by journeying towards it, it is the very self which we stumble across along the way.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Psalm 139

- ¹ You have searched me, Lord,
and you know me.
- ² You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
- ³ You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.
- ⁴ Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, know it completely.
- ⁵ You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.
- ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.
- ⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
- ⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
- ⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
- ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
- ¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"
- ¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.
- ¹³ For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
- ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
- ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
- ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book

- before one of them came to be.
- ¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, God!
How vast is the sum of them!
- ¹⁸ Were I to count them,
they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.
- ¹⁹ If only you, God, would slay the wicked!
Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty!
- ²⁰ They speak of you with evil intent;
your adversaries misuse your name.
- ²¹ Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord,
and abhor those who are in rebellion against you?
- ²² I have nothing but hatred for them;
I count them my enemies.
- ²³ Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
- ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.